CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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Ballari clash: Case filed against Janardhana Reddy, 10 others

Police registered an FIR against 11 people, including BJP MLA Janardhana Reddy, after a clash near his Ballari residence over a banner dispute

BALLARI

An FIR has been filed against 11 individuals, including BJP MLA G Janardhana Reddy, in connection with a clash that erupted near his residence in Ballari on Thursday evening over the installation of banners. The case was registered in the early hours of Friday based on a complaint by Chanal Shekhar, an aide of Ballari City MLA N Bharath Reddy.

Janardhana Reddy has been listed as accused number one, followed by former MLA G Somashekara Reddy, MLA and former minister B Sriramulu, and Opposition leader in the Ballari City Corporation Srinivas Motkar. According to the complaint, the confrontation broke out while banners were being put up ahead of the unveiling of a Valmiki statue at Valmiki Circle. Bharath Reddy's associate Sathish Reddy allegedly objected after Reddy and his supporters were accused of tearing down banners near the BJP leader's residence on Siruguppa Road.

It is alleged that Janardhana Reddy, Somashekara Reddy and their supporters not only damaged the banners but also engaged in an altercation with Sathish Reddy and his gunman Basavaraj, attacking them. A police officer named Srinivas was also reportedly injured during the incident. Based on the complaint, Brucepet police have registered a case and initiated legal action.

The Karnataka government suspended Ballari SP Pavan Nejjur, IPS, with immediate effect pending inquiry, for failing to effectively handle the situation on the ground that led to violence at SP Circle and for not properly briefing senior officers about the ground situation.

CM Siddaramaiah orders probe into Ballari violence

Bengaluru: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah stated that he has directed a thorough investigation into the Ballari clash. He emphasized determining whose gun caused the fatal bullet—whether BJP's or Congress's. The SP reported the victim was hit by a private bullet. Siddaramaiah instructed authorities to complete the probe and submit a detailed report on the incident.

R Ashoka alleges Bharath Reddy behind violence

Bengaluru: BJP leader R Ashok claimed Congress activists illegally entered Janardhana Reddy's residence and put up banners, blaming MLA Bharath Reddy for the death of a party worker. He urged immediate police action, including arrests under anti-goonda laws, and called for judicial investigation into the Ballari incident, criticizing the rising culture of gun violence in Karnataka politics.

Security tightened in Ballari after violent clash

Security has been heightened in Ballari even as the situation remained calm on Friday following Thursday's violent clash, which left one person dead, police confirmed.

Videos circulating online showed a private gunman allegedly firing shots into the air as tension escalated. The incident occurred ahead of Saturday's scheduled unveiling of a Valmiki statue. According to police, supporters of MLA Bharath Reddy were putting up banners near Janardhana Reddy's residence in the Avambhavi area when they were opposed by the latter's supporters, triggering heated arguments that soon turned into stone-pelting between both groups.

India will protect its citizens against 'bad neighbours': EAM

CHENNAI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Friday strongly criticised Pakistan, calling it a "bad neighbour" that has consistently pursued terrorism as a state policy, and reaffirmed India's sovereign right to safeguard its people. Speaking to students at IIT Madras, Jaishankar emphasised that India alone will determine its response to security threats and will not accept directives from external powers. He noted that sustained cross-border terrorism undermines the foundation of bilateral cooperation.

Referring to India's western neighbour, he said India faces the added challenge of Pakistan's "deliberate, persistent, and unrepentant" use of terror. "If a country chooses to continue with terrorism, India has every right to defend its people, and we will exercise that right," Jaishankar stated. He highlighted India's Operation Sindoor, conducted after the April terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam attributed to The Resistance Front, a proxy of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Jaishankar also linked terrorism to broader bilateral obligations, particularly the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), which India suspended after the Pahalgam attack. He stressed that agreements like water-sharing depend on good-neighbourly conduct, which cannot coexist with decades of violence. "You cannot seek the benefits of cooperation while continuing acts of terror. That is not reconcilable," he said, contrasting India's support for non-hostile neighbours. He further pointed to the Pakistani military establishment's role in perpetuating India's long-standing challenges, implicitly referencing Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir.

If a country chooses to continue with terrorism, India has every right to defend its people and will exercise that right.

— Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister

India's global respect through communication

Beyond regional security, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar highlighted the crucial role of transparent communication in foreign policy to avoid misinterpretation of India's actions internationally. "The way to prevent being misread is by communicating clearly, honestly, and effectively. When you do that, other nations respect it," he said during a fireside discussion.

NYC Mayor, 8 US Lawmakers urge fair trial for Umar Khalid

NEW DELHI

New York City Mayor Zoran Mamdani has sparked a political storm in India after writing a personal letter to jailed activist Umar Khalid. The letter, in which Mamdani recalls Khalid's words on bitterness surfaced alongside an appeal by eight US lawmakers .

Eight US lawmakers have called on India to ensure a fair and timely trial for Umar Khalid, who has been in detention under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for nearly five years. The letter, addressed to India's Ambassador to the US, Vinay Kwatra, was signed by senior Democrat Jim McGovern, Congressman Jamie Raskin, Senator Chris Van Hollen, Senator Peter Welch, Congresswomen Pramila Jayapal and Rashida Tlaib, Congressman Jan Schakowsky, and Congressman Lloyd Doggett.

The lawmakers expressed concern that Khalid's prolonged detention may violate international standards of due process, equality before the law, and proportionality. They urged Indian authorities to either provide a trial within a reasonable time or release him, emphasizing the principle of presumption of innocence until proven guilty.

Bullet train corridor: First mountain tunnel breakthrough

NEW DELHI

A key milestone in India's first high-speed rail project was achieved with the breakthrough of Mountain Tunnel-5 (MT5) in Palghar district, Maharashtra, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced on Friday. MT5, at 1.48 km, is the first and longest of seven mountain tunnels in Maharashtra on the 508-km Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Corridor, which includes eight mountain tunnels in total and one undersea tunnel. The project involves 27.4 km of tunnelling, with most of it underground.

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Saffron leader announces cash for chopping SRK's tongue

LUCKNOW

A fresh controversy erupted after Mira Thakur, former Agra district president of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, announced a cash reward of ₹1 lakh for anyone who would "chop Shah Rukh Khan's tongue," following his IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders' decision to sign Bangladeshi cricketer Mustafizur Rehman. Thakur, speaking to reporters in Mathura, also defaced posters of the actor and struck them with sandals as a mark of protest. Her statement came days after BJP leader Sangeet Som labelled Shah Rukh Khan a "traitor," alleging that the actor supported players from a country where Hindus were facing violence. Several seers also criticised Khan, questioning his decision to include a Bangladeshi player and demanding that Bangladeshi cricketers raise concerns over the safety of Hindus in their country. Prominent religious leaders, including Dhirendra Shastri condemned the actor.

Indore water tragedy: PM stays silent whenever poor die, says Rahul

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi sharply criticised the BJP's "double-engine government" in Madhya Pradesh after at least 10 people reportedly died due to contaminated drinking water in Indore. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains silent whenever the poor lose their lives and accused the state administration of "criminal negligence." Gandhi alleged that Madhya Pradesh has turned into the "epicentre of misgovernance," citing past incidents involving deaths linked to cough syrups, unhygienic conditions in government hospitals, and now the contaminated water crisis.

In a post on X, he said "poison" instead of water was supplied to residents while the administration "slept," and claimed poor families were left devastated while BJP leaders displayed arrogance instead of empathy. He questioned why repeated complaints about foul-smelling, dirty water were ignored, how sewage mixed with drinking water, why supply was not stopped, and when responsible officials would face action. Clean water is a fundamental right, he said, and accused the BJP government of destroying it through negligence.

Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava confirmed reports of 10 deaths linked to the diarrhoea outbreak, though locals claim the toll is higher. Health authorities said contamination occurred due to a pipeline leak, with over 1,400 residents affected by diarrhoea and vomiting in the Bhagirathpura area in the past nine days.

Uma Bharti slams MP govt over Indore water tragedy

BJP veteran and former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Uma Bharti launched a fierce attack on the state government over deaths caused by contaminated water. Bharti criticised the government's focus on compensation, saying human life cannot be valued at ₹2 lakh and demanded strict punishment for those responsible.

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Gig workers to get social security after 90 days of work

NEW DELHI

The Centre has proposed draft rules to operationalise the four labour codes, extending crucial social security and welfare protections to gig and platform workers. Under the draft, workers will qualify for benefits if they have completed at least 90 working days with a single aggregator or 120 days across multiple platforms in the previous financial year. The move aims to bring clarity and predictability to social protection eligibility for millions of app-based workers. For those engaged with multiple aggregators, working days will be added cumulatively, and work done for more than one aggregator in a single day will count separately.

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No luggage racks allowed on buses, orders Transport Minister

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government has ordered the removal of luggage racks from the tops of all buses and banned the transport of commercial goods to improve safety and reduce fire hazards. Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy announced the directive on Friday, emphasising that only small passenger luggage and suitcases will be permitted inside buses.

"All buses, both private and government-run, must remove rooftop luggage racks. No commercial goods should be carried on buses," Reddy said, citing past incidents to underline the urgency. "In the Kurnool bus tragedy, around 300 mobile phones with flammable batteries were being transported. In the Hiriyur bus accident, while rash driving by a container truck was the primary cause, it reinforces why buses should not carry commercial goods," the minister added.

The directive applies to both existing and new buses. Officials have been instructed to monitor compliance and ensure that buses do not transport hazardous materials alongside passengers.

QUICK READ

Urban areas see lower voter enumeration

NEW DELHI

The ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voters' lists in nine states and three Union Territories has seen significantly lower enumeration form collection in urban areas compared to rural regions, Election Commission officials said on Friday. Key reasons include electors being away due to work or professional commitments, as well as constant migration. Cities like Lucknow, Kanpur, Noida, and Patna showed particularly low urban response, while rural areas recorded higher collection rates.

Iran warns US against interference in protests

TEHRAN

Amid ongoing protests across Iran, a senior adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has issued a sharp warning to the United States, saying any interference would trigger "chaos and destruction" in the region. The response came after US President Donald Trump said Washington would intervene if Iran used lethal force against peaceful demonstrators, declaring the US was "locked and loaded". Protests, sparked by economic distress have spread from Tehran to several provinces.

POLL SURVEY WITHDRAWN

Poll survey vanishes from govt website after backlash

BENGALURU

The Karnataka Congress government has withdrawn a Lok Sabha election survey from its official website following sharp criticism from its own leaders over its findings and release timing. The report, prepared in August 2025 by the Karnataka Monitoring and Evaluation Authority (KMEA) and recently made public, vanished from the portal amid the backlash.

The survey claimed that 84.55% of respondents believed elections in India were free and fair, and 83.61% trusted Electronic Voting Machines to deliver accurate results. Conducted by Mysuru-based nonprofit GRAAM (Grassroots Research and Advocacy Movement) and commissioned by Chief Electoral Officer V Anbukumar, the survey covered 5,100 citizens. However, sources revealed that the KMEA has now decided to place the report under further "review and discussion."

Senior Congress leader BK Hariprasad charged that the survey was done "only to sing paeans" about the Election Commission.

"A nonprofit founded by a man working in the Prime Minister's Office did the survey," he said.

He added, "The survey is intended to protect the EC's image after the huge support Congress got for its December 14 protest against 'Vote Chori'."

Dismissing the survey results, Hariprasad said confidence in the Election Commission can return only when truly fair elections are conducted. He reminded that ₹10,000 was given to beneficiaries in Bihar ahead of elections and noted that the Assam Chief Minister has now promised ₹8,000 to women. Such practices, he argued, show that authorities have failed to curb electoral corruption.

IT/BT and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank said the survey was commissioned by the EC through the CEO. "The survey covered only 50 respondents per Assembly. Statistically weak, prone to wide sampling error, selection bias and not suitable for drawing conclusions," Priyank said.

QUICK READ

Youth Dies in Motorcycle Crash on NH-66 Bridge

Udupi

A tragic accident claimed the life of a young motorcyclist on the National Highway 66 bridge in Udyavar early Friday morning around 2:30 AM. The deceased has been identified as Yuvraj from Subrahmanya. He was traveling from Mangaluru towards Udupi when the bike, reportedly moving at excessive speed and handled carelessly, veered out of control and struck the bridge. Yuvraj fell onto the road, suffering severe injuries that proved fatal at the scene. Police arrived promptly to inspect the site. With assistance from K.M. Siraj of the SDPI ambulance in Uchila and Jalaluddin, they shifted the body to the mortuary at Ajjarakadu Hospital.

Bhadra Reservoir to Release Water for Irrigation

Shivamogga

Authorities have resolved to release water from Bhadra Reservoir continuously for 120 days, beginning with the left bank canal on January 3 and extending to the right bank canal from January 8. The unanimous decision emerged during the 88th meeting of the Bhadra Reservoir Irrigation Advisory Committee, held under the chairmanship of district in-charge Minister and School Education and Literacy Minister S. MadhuBangarappa. Convened at the conference hall of the Bhadra CADA office in Malavagoppa, the session focused on water allocation for summer crops in the command area during the 2025-26 season.

Mundgod Retired Teacher Loses ₹1.61 Cr to Cyber Fraudsters

Karwar

A retired teacher from the Tibetan Colony in Mundgod has fallen victim to an elaborate cyber fraud, losing ₹1.61 crore after being threatened with a fake "digital arrest" by fraudsters impersonating Mumbai Police officials.

The victim, 72-year-old Palden, received a WhatsApp call from a man who claimed to be an inspector from the Colaba Police Station in Maharashtra. The caller allegedly told him that his ATM card was among several cards recovered from a terrorist arrested in Mumbai and accused him of being involved in a money laundering case. To strengthen the deception, the fraudsters conducted video calls while dressed in police uniform and sent fake bank statements to Palden.

Sakaleshpur-Subrahmanya Ghat Section Electrified

GUNDYA

In a significant milestone for India's rail infrastructure, the Ministry of Railways announced the completion of electrification works on the Sakaleshpur-Subrahmanya Road Ghat section in Karnataka's Western Ghats. This 55-kilometer stretch, notorious for its steep gradients, sharp curves, and unforgiving terrain, has long been one of the most challenging segments in the Indian Railways network.

The successful trial run of an electric locomotive on December 28, 2025, marks a step forward in the country's push toward 100% rail electrification by the end of 2025, promising greener, faster, and more efficient train operations.

A Vital Link Through the Western Ghats

Nestled in the lush, biodiverse Western Ghats of Karnataka, the Sakaleshpur-Subrahmanya Road Ghat section forms a crucial part of the Mangaluru-Hassan-Bengaluru rail corridor. This single-track route connects the coastal city of Mangaluru—Karnataka's bustling port and emerging IT hub—with the state's interior regions, including Bengaluru. Traversing dense forests, it passes through 57 tunnels, 25 major bridges, and numerous minor structures, making it a lifeline for passengers, pilgrims, and freight moving between the coast and the highlands.

The section's history dates back to the meter-gauge era, when it was part of the Mysore State Railway. Converted to broad gauge in the 1990s, it has since handled increasing traffic, including passenger trains to pilgrimage sites like KukkeSubrahmanya and goods trains carrying agricultural produce and industrial materials.

However, its challenging geography—featuring gradients as steep as 1:37 (one of the sharpest in India) and curves with radii as tight as 5 degrees—has historically limited speeds and necessitated diesel locomotives, even as surrounding lines were electrified.

Overcoming Engineering Hurdles

Electrifying this ghat section was no small feat. The terrain lacks proper road access, forcing workers to rely on rail trolleys and manual transport for materials. Heavy monsoon rains, which can exceed 4,000 mm annually, often trigger landslides and soil instability, while the dense canopy and wildlife corridors added layers of environmental complexity.

South Western Railway (SWR), under whose Mysuru division the section falls, had to deploy innovative techniques, including specialized equipment for overhead electrification (OHE) installation in tunnels and on bridges.

Work on the project began in earnest around 2022, with overhead poles emerging in adjacent sections like Mangaluru-Bantwal. By late 2025, the final push involved stringing 25 kV AC overhead wires across the entire 55 km, culminating in the trial run where an electric loco hauled a freight train successfully from Subrahmanya Road to Sakaleshpur.

This achievement not only required technical prowess but also careful coordination to minimize disruptions to existing train services.

Greener Rails and Smoother Journeys

The electrification brings multifaceted advantages. Environmentally, it eliminates the need for diesel locomotives on this route, slashing carbon emissions by an estimated 20,000 tons per year.

Operationally, electric traction allows for seamless runs from Mangaluru to Bengaluru without loco changes, potentially reducing travel times and improving reliability. Trains can now accelerate faster on inclines, and the shift to electric power reduces fuel costs while enhancing energy efficiency.

For coastal Karnataka's economy, this upgrade is a boon. Mangaluru's growth as a secondary IT and knowledge hub, fueled by ports, education, and industries, demands better connectivity. Faster rail links could boost tourism to the scenic ghats and pilgrimage spots, while freight movement—vital for exports like coffee and spices—becomes more sustainable.

With electrification complete, speculation is rife about introducing semi-high-speed trains like Vande Bharat, which could halve the current 9-10 hour journey time between Mangaluru and Bengaluru. Upgrading Mangaluru Central station and developing coaching depots are also on the wishlist to handle increased capacity. Highlighting the impact of this achievement, Union Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting, and Electronics & Information Technology, AshwiniVaishnaw said, "Now we will be able to run Vande Bharat train through this route to Mangaluru."

As coastal Karnataka evolves, Indian Railways' ongoing investments will be key to bridging the gap between aspiration and reality, ensuring that this scenic yet strategic route serves as a model for sustainable rail development nationwide.

Civic Honor Accorded to Math Seer Ahead of Paryaya Ascension

PUTTUR

Residents of Puttur organized a civic felicitation program for Sri VedavardhanaSripada of Shiroor Math, who is preparing to ascend the Paryayapeetha at Udupi Sri Krishna Math. The event took place in front of Mahalingeshwara Temple.

The seer was welcomed near Darbe Circle and escorted in a procession to the venue. Upon receiving the honor, the swamiji extended an invitation to the people of Puttur to join the Paryaya celebrations in Udupi.

Ravisha Tantri, offering guru vandana, spoke about how the incoming Paryaya head would undertake initiatives beneficial to society and the nation, dedicating them selflessly.

Former legislator Sanjeeva Matandooru, honorary president of the civic honor committee U. Poovappa, former town council president LeelavatiAnnuNaik, Mahalingeshwara Temple management committee member Subhash Rai Bellippadi, and principal secretary of the civic honor committee UmeshKodibailu were present.

Several organizations and individuals paid respects, including Savanooru Vidyaramshi group of institutions director Seetharama Rai Savanooru, Muliya Jewels, YuvavahiniVitla, Puttila Parivara Seva Trust, Bharatiya Janata Party Puttur Mandal, ShivaliSampadaPuttur, Yadav Sabha Taluk Committee, GurujiYuvaka Mandal Adyanadka, Sharada Prabhu, VishwakarmaSamaja Beeramale, Vijaya Shamiyana, Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project, V.H.P. PutturPrakhand, Town Bank Puttur, ParivaraBantara Sangha Puttur, Brahmashri Narayana Guru SwamyBillava Sangha Puttur, Anegundi Guruseva Parishat Mahamandala Puttur zone president Purushottama Acharya, and Raghavendra Bharati Shri Sansthan Puttur zone president Venugopala.

Saja Radhakrishna Alva delivered the welcome address. Civic honor committee directors Arun Kumar Puttila and his spouse greeted the seer with fruits and flowers. Co-director Ravikumar Rai Kedambadi read the citation. Shivaprasad Talepadithaya compered the proceedings, while Hariprasad Yadav proposed the vote of thanks.

Presiding over the event, honorary president of the civic honor committee Dr. Suresh Putturay expressed hopes that during the two-year Paryaya period, the Hindu community would receive even greater guidance.

Nikhil B Assumes Charge as Shivamogga SP

SHIVAMOGGA

Nikhil B, an IPS officer, officially took charge as the Superintendent of Police for Shivamogga district on Thursday evening.

Originally hailing from Chitradurga district, he grew up in Bengaluru and holds a degree in mechanical engineering. Belonging to the 2017 IPS batch, he completed his probationary period in Raichur. He served as Assistant Superintendent of Police in Bhatkala, Uttara Kannada district, and shouldered responsibilities in the Anti-Naxal Force (ANF) as well as the Coastal Security Police.

For two years and eight months, he carried out duties as Deputy Commissioner of Police in Raichur district. Over the past one-and-a-half years, he has been handling similar responsibilities in Kolar district.

24th Kemthuru Doddanna Shetty Memorial Tulu Drama Competition to be Held

UDUPI

Tulukoota Udupi has announced that the 24th edition of the KemthuruDoddanna Shetty Memorial Tulu Drama Competition will take place from January 5 to 11 at Mudanna Mantapa in MGM College, Udupi.

President B. Jayakara Shetty Indrali shared details during a press conference, noting that the event provides a platform exclusively for amateur Tulu theater groups. This year, seven prominent teams have been selected to participate.

The festival opens on January 5 at 5 PM, with Karnataka Tulu Sahitya Academy president TaranathGattiKapikad presiding. K.M. Shetty, chairman of V.K. Group of Companies, will inaugurate the competition. The evening concludes with Kalamandir Udupi troupe presenting the play "Pili".

Subsequent performances include: January 6 – "Naga Sampige" by Ranga Milan Mumbai; January 7 – "Kashiteertha" by Maddadka Sri Vishnu Kalavidaru; January 8 – "Mugiyandi Kathe" by Malpe'sKaravaliKalavidaru; January 9 – "NelaNeerdaDunipu" by PatlaBhoomigeeta Cultural Vedike; January 10 – "Yes" by SumanasaKodavooru; and January 11 – "Mayokada Mannakaru" by Manipal SangamaKalavidaru.

Winners will receive cash awards: first place Rs. 20,000, second Rs. 15,000, and third Rs. 10,000. Additional prizes recognize excellence in direction, music, stage design, lighting, best actor, and best actress categories.Selected teams from within Karnataka get Rs. 5,000 as allowance, while out-of-state groups receive Rs. 10,000, along with necessary facilities.

Vice presidents Bhuvan Prasad Hegde and V.K. Yadav, secretary GangadharKidiyoor, and drama festival director Prabhakar Bhandari joined the president at the press meet.

Prez Medal Awardee Honoured at Udupi Sri Krishna Math

UDUPI

Assistant Sub-Inspector Shankar Poojary, a recipient of the Hon'ble President of India's Medal and currently serving with the Udupi District Armed Reserve Police, was honoured at the Sri Krishna Math, Udupi, under the Paryaya Sri Puttige Math. The felicitation took place as part of the Vishwagita Paryaya (2024–2026). Paryaya Peethadhipathi Sri Sugunendra Tirtha Swamiji honoured ASI Shankar Poojary, a native of Kadina Taru Bavaladi, Bijoor, by offering Sri Krishna Mukhya Prana Prasada in recognition of his distinguished service. The event highlighted the tradition of acknowledging exemplary public service during the ongoing Paryaya celebrations at the historic Sri Krishna Math.

Trophy Unveiling Set for Mr. Udupi Classic 2026

UDUPI

The trophy unveiling ceremony for Mr. Udupi Classic 2026, organized by the Udupi District Body Building Association under the leadership of Congress leader Prasad Raj Kanchan in connection with the ParyayaMahotsava, has been scheduled for Saturday, January 3, at 4 PM.

Blessings from the ParyayaPuttige Math seer will mark the start at the premises of Udupi Sri Krishna Math at 4 PM. The trophy will then be taken in a procession through the city streets.The formal unveiling program will follow at 5 PM in Atrium Auditorium, located in MandaviTimes Square Mall.

Udupi District Superintendent of Police Hariram Shankar will attend as the chief guest. Honorary guests include Udupi Urban Development Authority chairman DinakarHeruru, association president Jason Dias, and local entrepreneur Mithilesh.

Organizer Prasad Raj Kanchan announced in a release that the main Mr. Classic 2026 competition, featuring contests across various physique categories, will take place on January 17 at the Shokamata Church grounds in Udupi.

WATER PIPELINE REPAIR WORK

MP Urges Priority Repair of Damaged Water Pipelines

UDUPI

Parliamentarian Kota Srinivas Poojari stressed immediate repairs and separate pipeline installations for affected gram panchayats, citing lack of funds from local bodies.

Udupi-Chikkamagaluru Lok Sabha member Kota Srinivas Poojari has called upon the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to promptly undertake repairs and reinstallation of drinking water pipelines damaged due to national highway service road construction works.

He issued these instructions while presiding over a discussion meeting held at the District Commissioner's office hall in Rajatadri, Manipal, focusing on issues arising from drinking water pipeline installations within gram panchayats of the Kundapura assembly constituency.

Highway widening projects in areas including Koteshwara, Gopadi, Kumbhashi, and Tekkatte in Kundapura taluk, as well as Saligrama, Kotatattu, Kota, Manooru, Pandeshwara, and Sasthana gram panchayats in Brahmavar, have caused damage to public drinking water supply lines, leading to disruptions for residents. Poojari emphasized that NHAI must prioritize restoration efforts.

Future phases of the widening could further risk pipeline damage. Additionally, existing lines running through the middle of the road carriageway necessitate separate installations. Neither gram panchayats nor the rural development department have available grants for such repairs or new setups, making it essential for NHAI to handle these tasks. He suggested that relocating pipelines to the remaining 2.5-meter space along service roads would be appropriate.

Current cost estimates for repairs and new installations appear inflated, prompting Poojari to instruct engineers from the Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Department to re-examine and submit accurate figures.

Traffic Advisory Issued for Coastal Utsav Events in M'galuru

MANGALURU

The Mangaluru City Police have issued a traffic advisory in view of the Coastal Utsav celebrations being organised by the Dakshina Kannada district administration at Tannirbavi Beach on January 3 and 4, 2026. As part of the festivities, evening music programmes including a Music Festival, Kailash Kher Night and Vijay Prakash Night will be held on both days. With a large turnout of dignitaries and members of the public expected, traffic congestion is likely on the Kottara Chowki–Panambur National Highway stretch and on Tannirbavi Road during the event hours.The police have announced that parking of vehicles will be strictly prohibited on both sides of the road from Kudremukh Junction to Tannirbavi Beach during the programme timings. Visitors are advised to park their vehicles only at designated parking locations on Tannirbavi Beach Road. Directional signboards and parking guidance flex boards have been installed along the routes, and the public has been urged to follow these instructions and arrive well in advance to park at notified places.

QUICK READ

Mulki Farmer Injured in Alleged Extortion Bid FIR Registered

Mulki

Tension gripped parts of Talipadi Angaragudde on Wednesday evening after a farmer was allegedly assaulted by three men, reportedly linked to Sangh Parivar groups, who demanded money and attacked him when he refused to comply. The Mulki Police have registered a case and initiated an investigation into the incident. The incident centers around a livestock shed owned by Shamsu Saheb in the Kelaginmane area, where his buffaloes that had recently won prizes in a local Kambala event are housed. Police say that the accused — Shyamsundar Shetty, Akshay Poojari, and Suvin — allegedly arrived earlier in the day in a vehicle, took photos and videos of the animals and left. Later in the evening, the same group returned to the property and confronted Shamsu's son, Sahabuddin, and his father. Eyewitnesses reported that the men demanded money, which Sahabuddin questioned. As tensions rose, Shyamsundar allegedly struck Sahabuddin on the head, and Akshay is reported to have shoved him.

Sakleshpur–Subrahmanya ghat section electrified: MP

Mangaluru

Dakshina Kannada MP Captain Brijesh Chowta has welcomed the completion of electrification of the 55-km Sakleshpur–Subrahmanya Ghat section, calling it a historic milestone in the long struggle to upgrade railway infrastructure in the coastal region. Describing the ghat section as one of the most difficult and challenging railway stretches in the country, Chowta said the project would bring far-reaching benefits to Dakshina Kannada and neighbouring districts. "This will improve Bengaluru–Mangaluru rail connectivity, facilitate smoother passenger movement and give a major boost to freight transport linked to the port and regional trade," he said.

The MP noted that the electrification would support cargo movement, port operations and commercial activity while also improving the efficiency and reliability of train services on the crucial coastal corridor. Chowta expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, and Union Minister of State for Railways V. Somanna for their support. He also thanked railway officials and technical teams for completing the project within the stipulated timeline despite complex engineering challenges.

Can Coastal City Become the Next Indore—or Face a Public Health Crisis?

MANGALURU

long admired for its pristine coastline, literacy, and civic consciousness, stands at a crossroads today. As India celebrates success stories like Indore, which transformed itself into the country's cleanest city through sustained civic action and administrative will, Mangaluru too has the potential to follow that path. But beneath its calm exterior lies a troubling reality—one that threatens public health and undermines the city's future as a model urban centre.

Across several parts of Mangaluru, drinking water pipelines are running dangerously close to drainage lines. In many locations, the drainage lines are damaged, cut open, or left free-flowing, exposing untreated sewage alongside potable water infrastructure. Urban planners and public health experts warn that such proximity, especially when drainage lines are broken, poses a severe risk of contamination—particularly during monsoons, when seepage and backflow are common.

A stark and alarming example has emerged from Chilimbi, a densely populated area of the city. Here, residents have identified a broken drainage line flowing openly next to at least 150 open wells and decades-old water pipelines. These wells continue to be a major source of water for households, especially during summer months. The coexistence of sewage and drinking water sources in such close quarters has triggered fears of waterborne diseases and long-term health consequences.

Residents say they have repeatedly brought the issue to the attention of the Mangaluru City Corporation (MCC) through written representations and complaints. However, they allege that no concrete action has followed. "We have submitted petitions, met officials, and even documented the problem with photographs. But nothing has changed," said a local resident of Chilimbi, expressing frustration and helplessness.

The matter has also been raised with the Deputy Commissioner of Dakshina Kannada district, who currently serves as the Administrator of the Mangaluru City Corporation. According to residents, even complaints filed at this level have failed to elicit a response or prompt remedial measures.

Urban health activists point out that Mangaluru's situation is not unique, but the lack of urgency is worrying. "Indore did not become India's cleanest city overnight. It required political will, administrative accountability, and citizen participation. Mangaluru has aware citizens, but the system seems unresponsive," said a civic expert.

Ironically, the city that prides itself on education, healthcare institutions, and human development indices now risks slipping into avoidable urban decay. Experts warn that if water and sewage infrastructure issues are not addressed immediately, Mangaluru could face outbreaks of diseases such as gastroenteritis, hepatitis, and cholera—turning a manageable civic issue into a public health emergency.

As Mangaluru aspires to match cities like Indore in cleanliness and liveability, residents argue that the first step must be safeguarding its most basic necessity: clean drinking water. Whether the administration will wake up to this reality—or allow neglect to define the city's future—remains a question that demands urgent answers.

Complaint Committees Mandatory at Workplaces

MANGALURU

The Department of Women and Child Development has reiterated that it is mandatory for all government and private establishments with 10 or more employees to constitute an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act. The rule applies to offices, factories, garment units, universities, institutions, professional establishments and bodies under district, taluk and gram panchayat limits. Employers must form an ICC at every unit or branch, even if the organisation operates from multiple locations. Each committee should be headed by a senior woman employee, include members with legal knowledge or experience in social issues, and have at least 50 per cent women members. Complaint boxes must be installed and committee details displayed prominently.

Wetlands to Wastelands: How M'luru Is Choking Its Lifelines

MANGALURU

Mangaluru's rapid urban expansion is silently suffocating its most vital ecological assets—wetlands and water bodies—pushing the coastal city towards an irreversible water crisis. More than 1,600 acres of prime wetlands and water bodies along National Highways 75 and 66, on the approaches to the city, have been reclaimed for construction, leaving many on the brink of extinction.

Environmentalists warn that this unregulated filling of wetlands has disrupted natural underground water veins that once enabled the movement of water from surplus to deficit areas. The result is visible across the city and its outskirts: falling groundwater levels, drying wells and an alarming disappearance of water sources over the past few years.

Wetlands are often described as "terrestrial funnels" that connect surface water to underground aquifers. During the monsoon, they absorb excess rainwater, recharge groundwater and feed subterranean water channels. In summer, they help maintain surface water levels. However, in and around Mangaluru, these natural regulators are being choked with tonnes of soil by an aggressive real estate lobby, allegedly with little oversight from the authorities.

Along the coast, wetlands exist as estuaries, marshes, bogs, ponds and paddy fields—features once abundant around Mangaluru, Udupi, Kundapur, Bhatkal, Honnavar and Karwar. Internationally, this region has been rated "Class A" for water bodies under global wetland charters. "That recognition means nothing on the ground," allege environmental groups, accusing both the state government and enforcement agencies of apathy.

In Dakshina Kannada district alone, more than 540 ponds and tanks are reportedly on the verge of destruction due to wilful closures, rampant urbanisation and unchecked siltation caused by deforestation around wetlands. India's absence of a comprehensive law declaring wetlands under strict land-use norms has only emboldened encroachers, say activists.

Sources in the Minor Irrigation Department point out that Karnataka's coastal belt has over 18 world-class wetlands from the Chandragiri river in the north to Karwar. Mangaluru itself is linked to two highly sensitive wetlands ranked among the world's endangered—Gangolli estuary in Kundapur taluk, degraded by saline shrimp farming, and Anekere tank in Karkala, now reduced to a garbage dump choked with weeds and silt.

Ironically, India is a signatory to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, an international treaty aimed at preventing irrational destruction of wetlands. Scientific studies under the convention have established wetlands as crucial buffers against floods and droughts, groundwater rechargers, carbon sinks and even natural sewage purifiers.

Renowned ornithologist Dr. N.A. Madhyastha had once warned that the degeneration of wetlands is also altering migratory bird routes. Species such as golden plovers, cranes, pintails and bar-headed geese that once flocked to coastal Karnataka are now disappearing as habitats degrade.

Encroachments along the Gurupur river and its estuary—at Chitrapur, Kulur, Kottara, Baikampady and Jeppinamogaru—have further compounded the crisis.

M'luru Taluk Beary Sahitya Sammelana on Jan 4 at Gurupura Kaikamba

MANGALURU

The Karnataka Beary Sahitya Academy will organise the Mangaluru Taluk Beary Sahitya Sammelana on January 4 at Megha Plaza Auditorium, Gurupura Kaikamba, bringing together writers, scholars, artists and cultural activists to celebrate and reflect on Beary language, literature and culture.

The Sammelana will begin with a procession of the conference president and flag hoisting. The procession will commence at 9.30 am from the premises of Sabeelul Huda Al-Birr School, Gurupura Kaikamba, and proceed to the venue. The procession will be inaugurated by Haji M.H. Mohideen Addoor, Honorary President of the Sammelana Reception Committee. At 10 am, the Beary flag will be hoisted by Umar U.H., President of the Karnataka Beary Sahitya Academy.

The inaugural session will be held at 10.15 am, with Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly U.T. Khader formally inaugurating the Sammelana. Senior litterateur Abdul Rahiman Kuthettur will deliver the presidential address. The event will witness the presence of prominent cultural figures including Taranath Gatti Kapikad, President of the Karnataka Tulu Sahitya Academy, and Joaquim Stany Alvares, President of the Karnataka Konkani Sahitya Academy, among other dignitaries. Umar U.H. will preside over the function.

As part of the Sammelana, several Beary literary works will be released, including 'Padignarro Po' (short story collection) by Shameema Kuttar, 'Minnampulu' (haiku collection) by Haseena Malnad, 'Sampukaat' (poetry collection) by N.M. Haneef Nandarabetu, 'Belcha' (poetry collection) by Basheer Ahmed Bellayiru, and 'Naseeath' (poetry collection) by Haider Ali Katipalla.

At 12 noon, a discussion session on the presidential address will be held with participation from Prof. Haider Ali, journalist A.K. Kukkila, Muhammad Ali Uchil, President of Abu Dhabi Baryees Welfare Forum, and Hafsa Banu, member of the Karnataka Beary Sahitya Academy. The session will be moderated by Dr. Abubakar Siddique, Coordinator of the Beary Studies Chair, Mangalore University.

The post-lunch session will feature a Beary poets' meet at 2 pm, presided over by senior writer Muhammad Badduroor, followed by Daff performances and Beary songs by the Alva's College, Moodbidri, Daff troupe and Beary folk singers. The valedictory programme at 4 pm will honour achievers including Abdul Latheef Gurupura, Pathunji Moodushedde, M.P. Usman Mukrik Sooralpady, Sulaiman Gurupura, Saleeka Sooralpady, R.S. Ashraf Sooralpady, Abdul Shareef (Samarasya News) and Muhammad Nazeer Bajpe.

Petition Filed to Cancel Bail of Accused in Puttur Cheating Case Involving Young Woman

MANGALURU

A petition has been filed before a court seeking cancellation of the bail granted to Krishna J. Rao, the accused in a case from Puttur in Dakshina Kannada district, who allegedly cheated a young woman, impregnated her, and later refused to marry her.

According to the complainant, the accused had promised marriage and maintained a relationship with the woman, during which she became pregnant. However, after she delivered a child, the accused allegedly backed out of the marriage, prompting her to approach the police and seek legal recourse.

The case, which has drawn public attention, was registered on charges of cheating and exploitation. Though the accused was earlier granted bail by the court, Prathibha Kulai, who is assisting the complainant, has now moved an application seeking cancellation of the bail, citing the gravity of the offence and the hardship faced by the victim.

The petition argues that the accused misused the trust of the woman and abandoned her after childbirth, leaving her and the child in a vulnerable position. It further contends that granting bail in such cases sends a wrong signal to society and undermines the interests of justice, particularly when the victim continues to suffer social and economic consequences. Sources said the complainant has expressed fear and distress following the accused's release on bail and has urged the court to consider the larger social implications of the case.

PROTEST FOR GOVT JOBS

Koraga Community Demands Recruitment in Govt Jobs; Protest Enters 15th Day

UDUPI

Members of the Koraga community, under the banner of the Koraga Development Associations Federation of Karnataka and Kerala, have been staging an indefinite day-and-night protest demanding direct recruitment in government jobs. The protest, being held in front of the Udupi Deputy Commissioner's office at Manipal, entered its 15th day on Monday and continues unabated, with protesters wearing black armbands as a mark of dissent.

Addressing the gathering, federation coordinator K. Putran said that despite constitutional safeguards, the Koraga community continues to face deep-rooted social and psychological challenges. He pointed out that a sense of hesitation and inferiority still persists among Koraga youth, affecting their performance in competitive examinations. "Because of these historical and social disadvantages, many Koraga candidates are unable to clear exams even today. This is why we are demanding direct recruitment for the community," he said.

Protesters highlighted what they described as a glaring contradiction in the present system. Several Koraga youths, despite being graduates and possessing higher educational qualifications, are working as sanitation workers in municipal bodies. "Education has not translated into dignified employment for our community. Even after studying, our youth are forced into menial jobs. Direct recruitment is the only way to ensure they get appropriate government employment," the protesters said.

The agitators also expressed disappointment over what they termed as unfulfilled promises by the government. According to them, during earlier protests, assurances were given that steps would be taken to address their demand for direct recruitment. "Those assurances have not been implemented till date. That is why we have been compelled to continue this protest," Putran said.

Media reports have also quoted community members expressing anguish over their inability to navigate the highly competitive job market. Praveen, a youth from the Koraga community, reportedly said that many in the community are unaware of how to access employment opportunities in the current competitive environment. "Private employers do not offer us jobs, and government jobs are also out of reach. We are stuck in between," he said.

The protesters have urged the authorities to examine the issue at the departmental level and initiate immediate corrective measures. They have demanded that officials be directed to take concrete steps to implement direct recruitment in government services for the Koraga community.

Stressing that the Koragas are among the indigenous communities of the coastal region, the federation has appealed to the government to introduce urgent and effective reform measures aimed at their social and economic upliftment. "This is not just about jobs; it is about restoring dignity and ensuring real inclusion for one of the most marginalised communities in the region," the protesters said.

QUICK READ

BBMP Clears 9 Tonnes of Garbage in Five Hours

Bengaluru

Following New Year celebrations, the BBMP successfully cleared nearly nine tonnes of garbage across the Bengaluru Central Corporation limits in a record five hours. The swift action of BBMP staff has been widely appreciated by residents. To ensure public safety during the festivities, the civic body implemented extensive measures, including barricades on major roads, deployment of waste management personnel, and a team of doctors with ambulances for medical emergencies. Adequate lighting ensured uninterrupted power supply, while engineers were appointed as nodal officers to supervise operations.

Auto Driver, Techie Arrested Over Obscene Messages

Bengaluru

The Cyber Crime Police arrested an auto driver and a techie for sending obscene messages to actor Darshan's wife, Vijayalakshmi, on social media. Vijayalakshmi had expressed frustration over the lack of action a week after filing the complaint and met City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh on Wednesday. Following her meeting, authorities acted swiftly. Auto driver Chandrashekhar (45) from Chikkabanavara and Nithin, a Bengaluru-based software professional from Davangere, were taken into custody. Investigations revealed that the duo sent offensive messages via Instagram and Facebook, prompting the police to register the case and initiate further legal proceedings.

Republic Day Offer: 50% off on Kannada Books

Bengaluru

In celebration of Republic Day, the Kannada Development Authority and Kuvempu Bhasha Bharati Authority have announced a 50 percent discount on all books throughout January. The Kannada Book Authority, which has published over 700 titles spanning the Kannada literary field, aims to make these works accessible to the general public at affordable prices. KB Kiran Singh, administrative officer of the authority, stated that the discount applies to all books, encouraging readers to explore Kannada literature. The month-long offer provides an opportunity for students, scholars, and literature enthusiasts to expand their collections while promoting regional language reading.

Deliver Services Promptly, Prioritise Public Welfare: CM urges Officials

CM stresses officials must serve people efficiently and with compassion in 2026

BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has called on government officials to provide services to the people promptly, while responding on secular and humanitarian grounds. Addressing a meeting of senior officials, he emphasised the crucial role of bureaucrats in addressing the difficulties faced by farmers and citizens across the state.

Wishing the officials a happy New Year, Siddaramaiah highlighted that while Ugadi marks the Hindu new year, the English calendar's 2026 beginning is celebrated worldwide. "May 2026 bring prosperity and happiness to all citizens, especially the poor and farmers," he said.

Reflecting on 2025, he noted that while good rains benefited agriculture, crop damage affected around 12 lakh hectares. The state and central governments provided compensation through SDRF and NDRF, respectively. "It is our duty to extend more support to farmers. Rs 8,500 per hectare has been given as compensation for affected crops, offering some relief," he said.

The Chief Minister criticised opposition parties for unnecessary criticism, stressing that governance must prioritise socio-economic welfare. Citing Dr B.R. Ambedkar, he said political freedom alone is insufficient; true governance ensures equal opportunities and decentralisation of power. He urged officials to deliver justice and ensure government services are provided without delay, noting that postponing services amounts to negligence.

Siddaramaiah also commended the police department for maintaining law and order during New Year celebrations in Bangalore and across the state. He encouraged officials to start the New Year with renewed energy and dedication.

"While delivering essential services, officers must act with humanity and secularism. We must work hard to provide justice to all, particularly those deprived of social justice," the CM concluded, urging officials to uphold fairness, efficiency, and compassion in their daily responsibilities.

This guidance sets the tone for administrative priorities in 2026, with a focus on farmer support, timely service delivery, and equitable governance.

Incitement to Terror from Jail: NIA Chargesheets 3, Including ASI, Psychiatrist

BENGALURU

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a second supplementary chargesheet against three individuals in a case involving incitement of prisoners to commit terrorist acts, allegedly linked to the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba organization.

The three named in the chargesheet are Anees Fatima, ASI Chan Pasha A, and prison psychiatrist Dr S Nagaraj. They have been booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Explosive Substances Act, Prevention of Corruption Act, and Karnataka Prisons Act.

According to the NIA, Anees Fatima, mother of accused Junaid, provided logistical support and money to T Naseer, an inmate of Parappana Agrahara Jail. She allegedly procured hand grenades and walkie-talkies, facilitated communication between prisoners, and aided main accused Salman Khan in fleeing to Dubai by arranging travel documents. Salman Khan was later arrested in Rwanda and brought back to India.

ASI Chan Pasha, employed with the Urban Armed Reserve - South Division, allegedly shared the timings and routes of T Naseer's court escort with the accused in return for a reward from Salman Khan. Meanwhile, Dr Nagaraj was accused of smuggling mobile phones into the prison and selling them to inmates. Naseer reportedly used one such phone to incite fellow prisoners to commit terrorist acts.

Earlier investigations by Bengaluru police revealed a plot to threaten India's sovereignty and security, involving weapons, ammunition, and digital devices stored in the prison. The accused were reportedly preparing to help T Naseer, linked to the 2008 Bengaluru serial blasts case, escape while being taken to court.

The NIA took over the case registered by Bengaluru Police in October 2023 and had previously filed a chargesheet against nine accused, including Junaid Ahmed, who had been absconding. The agency continues to probe the network of prisoners and external facilitators linked to terrorist activities.

BMTC Feeder Ridership Hits 1.5 Lakh, Awaits Funds and Tech Upgrades

BENGALURU

With the expansion of Namma Metro driving demand for first- and last-mile connectivity, Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) feeder services are now transporting 1.5 lakh passengers daily, up by nearly 50,000 from last year.

The dedicated metro feeder fleet has grown to 236 buses from 180, covering 55 of 83 metro stations, yet the corporation continues to face funding gaps and delayed technological upgrades, including the long-awaited rollout of the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) on buses.

Currently, 55 metro stations are linked to dedicated BMTC feeder (MF) routes, covering 66% of the network. The busiest feeder route, MF-5, connects Sir M Visvesvaraya Terminal (SMVT) and SV Road Metro stations on Old Madras Road to Silk Board. A senior BMTC official said that most feeder services are aligned with the Purple and Green Line stations, while the Yellow Line sees comparatively fewer feeder buses, though services are expected to expand as demand grows.

For the remaining 28 unconnected stations, BMTC cited constraints such as the absence of parking bays, unsuitable approach roads, and sufficient coverage by existing regular routes in central business districts (CBDs). "Most of these stations are located in CBD areas already well served by regular BMTC buses, so dedicated feeders are not necessary. However, if station-specific demand emerges, we will introduce bus services," the official said. Plans to operate mini-buses have also remained unrealised.

BMTC has long sought viability gap funding from Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) to offset operational losses, as most feeder buses run at a deficit. While BMRCL indicated that financial support would be addressed at the state government level, no funds have yet been released. In February 2025, during a metro fare hike, BMRCL had stated that the increase would support feeder operations, but funding has not materialised.

Additionally, more than two and a half years after Namma Metro launched the NCMC, BMTC buses have yet to adopt the unified payment system. Commuters continue to face inconvenience due to the lack of seamless multimodal payment options, and the absence of incentives for integrated public transport remains a challenge.

With ridership rising steadily, commuters and officials alike are urging timely funding and technology upgrades to ensure BMTC's metro feeders can operate efficiently and sustainably.

BECC Issues Safety Guidelines for PGs, Hostels

BENGALURU

The Bengaluru East City Corporation (BECC) has issued a public health and safety advisory to all paying guest accommodations, service apartments and hostels within its jurisdiction, directing them to inspect their premises and ensure strict compliance with safety norms within seven days.

The advisory mandates adherence to all safety regulations prescribed by the city corporation and other applicable laws. The move follows a recent commercial-grade gas cylinder blast at a PG accommodation in Kundalahalli, which claimed the life of a software professional and left three others seriously injured.

BECC Commissioner D S Ramesh said the protocol aims to enhance safety through the use of authorised LPG connections, prohibition of storing excess gas cylinders, and ensuring proper ventilation and fire safety measures. The guidelines also stress the need for functional fire extinguishers, clearly marked emergency exits, electrical safety checks and possession of valid trade licences. He added that special inspections would be carried out by BECC officials to verify compliance.

Yellow Line Commuters Demand More Feeder Buses to Suburbs

BENGALURU

Namma Metro's Yellow Line, which links central Bengaluru to Bommasandra in the south, has eased commuting for many, but residents of the southern suburbs say public transport options beyond Bommasandra remain limited. Commuters are urging the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) to increase feeder services connecting interior areas of southern Bengaluru, including rapidly growing suburbs like Anekal, to nearby Metro stations.

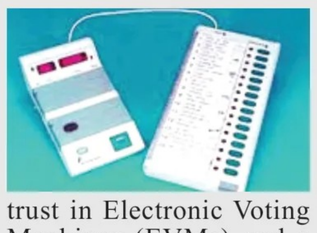
Anekal, home to several industries and educational institutions, sees heavy commuter traffic. Residents say additional feeder buses running from Bommasandra Metro to Anekal would reduce crowding on regular BMTC routes such as 361C and 356M. "At the start of Yellow Line operations, demand for feeder services was minimal. But with more trainsets now running, more people commute south," said S Rahul, a frequent commuter. He added that the current system is inconvenient during peak hours, with the last bus departing around 4pm, leaving commuters stranded during evening rush hours. Another regular commuter, A Amogh, highlighted the overcrowding issues. "The buses become packed while heading to Bommasandra.

State Body Finds High Trust in EVMs in Kharges' Home Turf

BENGALURU

Even as the ruling Congress continues to allege that the Election Commission (EC) is in cahoots with the BJP over "vote chori," a recent report by the Karnataka Monitoring and Evaluation Authority (KMEA) presents a contrasting picture from within the state.

Based on a survey of 5,100 respondents across Belagavi, Bengaluru, Kalaburagi, and Mysuru divisions, the report found a reasonably high level of trust in Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and a strong belief that the 2024 Lok Sabha elections were free and fair.



Kalaburagi division, the home turf of AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge and Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Minister Priyank Kharge, recorded the highest levels of trust: 83 percent of respondents trusted EVMs, and 85 percent believed the elections were free and fair. The father-son duo have publicly supported Rahul Gandhi's allegations of vote manipulation, and Congress has even floated the idea of returning to ballot papers for local body polls.

In Bengaluru and Belagavi, 64 percent of respondents trusted EVM accuracy, while in Mysuru, 72 percent considered the elections free and fair.

Pink Parking for Expecting Mothers Draws Praise

BENGALURU

A simple yet thoughtful parking intervention at a Bengaluru mall caught the attention of a visitor from Pune this Christmas Eve, illustrating how small design choices can significantly enhance public experiences.

Akshay Raina, a software engineer from Pune visiting the city with his family, noticed something unusual while leaving Nexus Mall on Bannerghatta Road. "I was in Bengaluru for the last few days to meet my sister, and as an engineer, I tend to observe how things work. Parking layouts in malls are usually stressful, and this was no different until I noticed a 'Pink Parking' zone while exiting," Raina said.

Curious, he explored the concept and realized the parking bays were reserved for expecting mothers and strategically located near the mall entrance. "It was Christmas Eve and the mall was crowded, but this parking was thoughtfully placed near the entry gate. It is extremely beneficial for pregnant women and also creates awareness among the public. I did not see something like this back in Pune. Other malls should definitely adopt this," he added.

The initiative, introduced by Nexus Koramangala Mall, is part of a broader effort to make retail spaces more inclusive and user-centric. Centre Director Dhanasekaran Ramachandran explained, "A mall's success should not be measured only by its retail mix, but by how well it responds to the real needs of its visitors. Our Pink Parking initiative and the dedicated parking zone for expecting mothers are small but meaningful steps towards making our spaces safer, more inclusive and more empathetic."

Maintenance Work Triggers Frequent Power Cuts in B'luru

BENGALURU

Several parts of Namma Bengaluru are witnessing frequent power cuts due to intensified maintenance work, officials from the Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Ltd (KPTCL) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (Bescom) said. A senior KPTCL official explained that addressing power leaks, technical faults and transmission and distribution (T&D) losses requires planned shutdowns. With the rising cost of conductors, reactors and other equipment, the state is managing with existing infrastructure. As per energy department data, T&D losses stand at around 2.9% per annum, within the limit set by the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission. Officials said demand for electricity rises from January with increasing temperatures, necessitating early maintenance. Bescom added that ageing transformers and power lines require regular repairs, and advance utility shifting is being planned to minimise outages during summer and monsoon.

BENGALURU SKYDECK MOVE

Skydeck Project Likely to Rise in West Bengaluru

BENGALURU

The much-anticipated 250-metre high skydeck project, designed to offer panoramic views of Bengaluru, has found a probable new home in the Challaghatta-Bheemanakuppe area in the city's western corridor. This marks the sixth location considered since the idea was first proposed by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar.

Officials tracking the project indicated that this site is expected to be finalised. On Thursday, Shivakumar inspected the 46-acre plot, situated near the Bengaluru–Mysuru access-controlled highway. The land had previously been notified by the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) as part of the Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout. Earlier options included parcels in Baiyappanahalli (10 acres), Hemmigepura (25 acres), a Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited-owned land, Bangalore University campus (25 acres), and Kommaghatta (30 acres).

Repeated setbacks, including aviation safety concerns, opposition from local residents, students and faculty, and feasibility challenges had delayed the project at previous locations. A senior official said the current site is more ideal than earlier options, being free from legal complications and aviation safety issues. "The BDA owns the land, and it is just 500 metres from a major arterial road and 1 km from the highway. This will make implementation far easier," the official said.

After inaugurating a newly built BDA ramp at the Hebbal Flyover junction, Shivakumar noted that land previously acquired by KIADB for the NICE road project was sought for the skydeck, but clearance was denied. "NICE thinks it is bigger than the government. We sought an NOC, but they refused. I know how to teach a lesson," he said.

QUICK READ

Industrial awareness program on January 8

CHITRADURGA

The Department of Industries and Commerce, in collaboration with KSIC, the District Industries Centre, and KASIA, will organise a one-day awareness program for industrialists on January 8, 2026, from 10:30 AM to 5:00 PM. The event will be held at Hotel Aishwarya Naveen, near NH-4, Kelagote, Chitradurga, and will cover topics including ZED, LEAN, and Export Awareness, along with information on government facilities and support available to industries. Joint Directors of the District Industries Centre have urged industrialists to actively participate in the program to gain valuable insights and make the best use of the opportunities and assistance provided by the Industries Department.

Farmers urged to register crops online

GADAG

The Hinguru crop survey for 2025-26 has begun, and farmers are advised to self-register their crop details using the "Hingaru Raithara Bele Samiksha 2025" app, available on Google Play Store. Recording crop information ensures eligibility for Minimum Support Price (MSP) schemes, crop insurance, drought and flood compensation, soil health records, and agricultural loans. Farmers who fail to upload their details may miss out on these government benefits. Joint Agriculture Director, Chetana Patil, urged farmers to promptly submit their information through the app.

Special Aadhaar enrollment and update camps

CHIKKABALLAPUR

To meet the growing demand for Aadhaar enrollment and update services, the postal department is organizing special camps across the district. Citizens can access timely and convenient services at designated locations. These camps have been set up at key centers including the Chikkaballapur main post office, Bhagipale post office, and Alapur city post office. The initiative, coordinated by senior officials of the postal department, aims to ensure smooth Aadhaar registration, updates, and related services for residents. Citizens are encouraged to visit these camps to complete their Aadhaar processes efficiently without delays.

Ballari clash: Investigation should to identify shooter, says Parameshwar

Special buses from Hubballi and Navalagund have been arranged to transport devotees conveniently to Yellammana Gudda fair

TUMAKURU

Karnataka Home Minister Dr. G. Parameshwara addressed the violent clash in Ballari on Thursday night, stating that the identity of the person who fired the fatal shot must be determined through investigation. Speaking to reporters in Tumakuru, he confirmed that a Congress worker, Rajasekhar, was killed near the residence of MLA Janardhan Reddy after being struck by a bullet, and emphasised that police are conducting a thorough inquiry.

He criticised attempts to politicise events, citing recent disruptions during the unveiling of the Valmiki statue, and asserted that such politically motivated actions will not be tolerated. Dr. Parameshwara said that police have detained individuals present at the scene and confiscated firearms used by the gunmen. Preliminary reports suggest that the fatal shot came from within one of the groups, and evidence is being collected to support the investigation.

According to ADGP R. Hitendra, four separate cases have been registered following the clash in the Avambavi area over the installation of banners near Janardhan Reddy's house. These include complaints of assault, unlawful death, disrespect to Valmiki Maharshi, and a case under Section 307 IPC. Both private gunmen's weapons have been seized along with bullets for forensic examination.

The incident involved stone-pelting and violent confrontations between supporters of Congress MLA Bharat Reddy and Janardhan Reddy. Several people were injured and admitted to hospital. Law enforcement, including Ballari Division IGP Vartika Katyar and SP Jahnavi, visited the site to assess the situation. A prohibitory order has been imposed to prevent further unrest, and authorities report that the situation has now stabilised.

The Home Minister reiterated that strict legal action will be taken against perpetrators once the investigation identifies the shooter, while maintaining public order remains a priority.

Road safety awareness: 37th national month observance

GADAG

Observing the 37th National Road Safety Month-2026, officials have urged everyone to prioritize road safety and strictly follow traffic rules to prevent accidents. C.S. Shivanagowda, Member Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, stated that reducing road accidents is a collective responsibility, and spreading awareness on traffic regulations is a duty for all departments. The program was inaugurated at the District Administration Auditorium on Friday, in collaboration with the Regional Transport Office and the District Legal Services Authority. Shivanagowda highlighted that lack of awareness and frequent violations—such as underage driving, unregistered vehicles, overspeeding, careless driving, and driving under alcohol or drug influence—are major causes of accidents. He emphasized that students should be educated about road rules to foster a culture of responsible driving. Senior Police Officer Mahantesh Sajjan added that awareness should extend beyond schools to local communities. Wearing helmets during vehicle rides is mandatory, and parents must not allow children under 18 to drive. Accidents often occur due to a moment's negligence, endangering lives, making public education critical.

Mothers urged to breastfeed exclusively for six months

CHITRADURGA

Protecting a child's health is a shared social responsibility, said District Health Education Officer Krishna Nayak, stressing that mothers must exclusively breastfeed their babies for the first six months to safeguard them from infections. He was speaking at a mothers' awareness meeting on pneumonia organized by the Health Department at Indira Nagar, Bharamasagar in Chitradurga taluk.

He appealed to mothers to maintain hygiene, make proper use of government healthcare services, and take timely preventive steps so that infants do not contract infections. Reducing maternal and infant mortality should be a priority, he added.

Taluk Health Education Officer B. Moogappa explained that pneumonia is a serious lung infection. Awareness campaigns on pneumonia are being conducted from November 12 to February 28. He listed symptoms such as fever, loss of appetite, cough, and yellow phlegm. To prevent pneumonia, children must receive nutritious food, timely vaccinations, reduced indoor pollution exposure, and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, he said.

Field Health Education Officer Janaki highlighted issues related to women's health such as abdominal pain, abnormal bleeding, and reproductive infections. Women above 30 should undergo regular screening for non-communicable diseases and seek timely treatment, she advised.

ASHA mentor Tabitha spoke about maternal care, urging pregnant women to register their names within three months with ASHA workers, Anganwadi staff, or health officials, obtain the mother card, attend regular check-ups, and ensure institutional delivery for the safety of both mother and child.

Health officials, ASHA workers, pregnant women, and local residents were present at the programme.

Special mediation campaign launched for 90 days

CHIKKABALLAPUR

A special 90-day mediation campaign, "Special Mediation Campaign 2.0," has been launched in the district, aimed at resolving disputes efficiently and providing citizens with a reliable conflict-resolution platform, informed district mediator R. N. Ramalingegowda. The campaign was inaugurated at the district administration office, with officials emphasizing its importance in continuing the work of the earlier mediation drive conducted from January 1 to November 30. During that period, 2,092 complaints were registered, out of which 1,069 were taken up for mediation, and 190 cases were successfully resolved. Building on this experience, the new campaign will run from January 2 to April, covering multiple areas in the district and addressing pending and fresh complaints. The campaign targets a wide range of disputes, including check bounce cases, vehicular accidents, domestic conflicts, property and service-related disputes, land issues, financial disagreements, and other civil and criminal complaints.

ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS

District launches road safety awareness drive

CHIKKABALLAPUR

The district administration has announced a special month-long road safety awareness campaign to run until January 30, focusing on reducing accidents and promoting safe driving habits, informed district legal services authority chairperson T.P. Ramalingegowda.

The initiative, coordinated with the district administration, police, Panchayats, and traffic authorities, aims to sensitize citizens about traffic regulations and responsible road behavior. With road accidents steadily increasing, officials emphasized that preventive measures, including strict adherence to traffic rules, wearing helmets, and using seat belts, are crucial for safeguarding lives. Young drivers under 18, reckless driving, speeding, driving under alcohol or substances, and negligence remain significant causes of accidents. The campaign will involve awareness programs across urban and rural centers, schools, colleges, and public spaces. Educational sessions will highlight the importance of helmets, seat belts, and cautious driving. Police teams will conduct enforcement drives, ensuring compliance, while media and community leaders will actively support awareness initiatives. The district administration will also distribute road safety posters, stickers, and guides on school bus safety and proper traffic conduct. Police officials, local representatives, and civil society members will monitor the campaign's impact, ensuring responsible driving practices. Officials stressed that parental supervision is essential; children under 18 should not operate vehicles. Helmet usage among two-wheeler riders will be strictly enforced, with penalties for non-compliance. Previous campaigns showed a significant reduction in minor accidents where safety practices were followed. Ramalingegowda urged citizens to actively participate, follow traffic regulations, and promote road safety culture to prevent accidents, protect precious lives, and contribute to the district's overall safety. The campaign underscores the importance of collective responsibility, law enforcement, and community awareness in making Chikkaballapur's roads safer for everyone.

PUBLIC NOTICE

To All Persons, let it be known that my clients 1) Smt. Mahadevamma, wife of late. K.S. Gangadharaiah, aged about 71 years, residing at Kethohalli Village, Kasaba Hobali, Ramanagara Taluk, Bengaluru South District (earlier Ramanagara District), 2) Smt. Renukamma @ K.G. Renuka, wife of Chandrakanth. T.S, aged about 43 years, residing at No. 406, 6th Cross, Saraswathi nagara, Vijayanagara Post, Bengaluru–560040 and 3) Smt. Vinoda Kumari K.G wife of M.H. Channabasappa, aged about 39 years, residing at No. 34, Inchara, Behind Nalanda Convent, Raghavendra Nagar, Someshwara Post, Madhugiri Taluk, Tumkur District–572102, are the joint owners of the agricultural landed property bearing Survey. No. 37 measuring 04 acres 29 guntas, Survey. No. 38, measuring 04 acres 07 guntas and Survey. No. 39 measuring 03 acres 25 guntas, situated at Kethohalli Village, Kasaba Hobali, Ramanagara Taluk, Bengaluru South District (earlier Ramanagara District) (hereinafter referred to as schedule properties). One Sri. Jeevan. K.N, son of Sri. Nanjappa Patel, aged about 38 years, proprietor of M/s Honnu Properties, residing at No. 23, 17th Cross, Near Church, M.T.S. layout, Kengeri Upanagara, Bengaluru–560060, approached my clients and told them that he will purchase the schedule properties and develop the same into residential layout and my clients also agreed to the same. After negotiations the sale consideration has been fixed for ?. 6,51,30,000/- (Six crores fifty-one lakhs thirty thousand rupees only). The Jeevan. K.N has paid a total sum of ?. 3,00,00,000/- (Three crores rupees only) to my clients as advance till today by installments.

My clients have executed a registered Sale Agreement dated: 26-12-2024 in favour of Jeevan. K.N, which is registered in the office of the Sub-Registrar, Ramanagara in Book No. 1, as document registration No. RMN-1-10163-2024-25, registered on 02-01-2025. The time period agreed under the Sale Agreement is 9 (nine) months from the date of Sale Agreement. But the above mentioned Jeevan. K.N has not paid the balance consideration of ?. 3,51,30,000/- (Three crores fifty-one lakhs thirty thousand rupees only) on time, even after repeated demands from my clients; hence the Jeevan. K.N has intentionally breached the terms and conditions of the Sale Agreement. Since the Jeevan. K.N has intentionally breached the terms and conditions of the Sale Agreement, my clients are not interested to complete the sale transaction.

My clients have executed a registered General Power of Attorney in favour of Jeevan. K.N on 26-12-2024 which is registered in the office of the Sub-Registrar, Ramanagara in Book No. 4 as document registration No. RMN-4-647/2024-25, registered on 03-01-2025, to represent them in the concerned government and other offices to file applications and get the approvals and to do some other acts, which are necessary for the development of residential layout in the above mentioned property. Since the Jeevan. K.N has not paid the balance consideration on time, my clients are not ready to complete the sale transaction. Now there is no necessity to use the powers given to the Jeevan. K.N under the General Power of Attorney dated: 26-12-2024. Hence my clients have issued legal notice to the said Jeevan. K.N on 31.12.2025 and thereby cancelled/revoked the General Power of Attorney dated; 26.12.2024. Hence the said Jeevan. K.N is not at all my clients Attorney anymore, he is not entitled to exercise any of the powers under the General Power of Attorney dated: 26.12.2024.

Wherefore, I am issuing the legal notice to the General Public by this paper publication not to do any business, land transaction, money transaction with the above mentioned Jeevan K.N., with respect to the above mentioned schedule properties, because he is not at all my clients Attorney.

For further details contact my clients Advocate Sri. Nagachandra R., Advocate in the below mentioned address.

Sd/- Nagachandra. R.,
Advocate,
Chambers at No. 59/A,
Chiranjeevi nilaya, Jalamangala Road,
Hanumantha Nagara, Ward No. 25,
Ramanagara Town–562159,
Mobile: 8884900848.

MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE LIMITED

FORMERLY MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE PVT LTD
CIN : U65923KL2010PLC039179

Regd Office: IV/470A (OLD) W/638A (NEW) Manappuram House Valapad Thrissur, Kerala 680567
Corp Office: Manappuram Home Finance Limited, Third Floor, Unit No. 301 to 315, A Wing, 'Kanakia Wall Street', Andheri-Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai-400093, Maharashtra.
Phone No.: 022-66211000, **Website:** www.manappuramhomefin.com

DEMAND NOTICE

Whereas the Authorized Officer of Manappuram Home Finance Ltd., having our registered office at IV/470A (old) w/638A (new), Manappuram House, Valapad, Thrissur, Kerala-680567 and branches at various places in India (hereinafter referred to as "MAHOFIN") is a Company registered under the Companies Act, 1956 and a Financial Institution within the meaning of sub-clause (iv) of clause (m) of sub-section (1) of Section 2 of the Securitization and Reconstruction of financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act. 2002 (hereinafter referred so as the Act) read with Notification No. S.O. 3466 (E) dated 18th December, 2015 issued by the Govt. of India, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, New Delhi, inter alia carrying on business of advancing loans for construction and / or purchase of dwelling units and whereas the Borrower / Co-Borrowers as mentioned in Column No. 2 of the below mentioned chart obtained loan from MAHOFIN and whereas MAHOFN being the secured creditor under the SARFAESI Act, and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 2 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued demand notice calling upon the Borrowers / Co-Borrowers as mentioned herein below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notices with further interest thereon within 60 days from the date of notice, but the notices could not be served upon some of them for various reasons. That in addition thereto for the purposes of information of the said borrowers enumerated below, the said borrowers are being informed by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name Of The Borrower/ Co-Borrower/Lan/Branch	Description Of Secured Asset In Respect Of Which Interest Has Been Created	Npa Date	Date Of Notice Sent & Outstanding Amount
1	Nandini B M, B M Sunil Kumar, Shanthamma A, Madaiah A, /MHL00340008059/ Mysore	Pl.D. No.152100102100100636, Property No.571, Bandihole Grama, Bandihole Grama Panchayath, Krishnarajapete Taluk, Mandya District, Karnataka, Pin: 571426 Total Measuring 205.22 Square Meters. East-Conservancy&VacantPlace,West-Conservancy & Vacant Place, South-Conservancy & House Belong To Madaiah, North-Road	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.333107/-
2	Sanavulla P A, Najumunnisa N, Shajid A, Abbdul Raffi M, /NHL00340008268/ Mysore	Property No. 20-504-156, Assessment No. 3474/2, Ward No.9, Gandhi Nagara Ashraya Badavane, Periyapatna Town & Taluk, Mysore District, Karnataka, Pin: 571107 Measuring East To West 6.096012 Meters And North To South 9.144018 Meters. East-House Belongs To Jayalakshmi W/O Late Natesh, West-House Belongs To Susheelamma W/O Shivannegowda, South-20 Feet Road, North-Vacant Site Belongs To Harish	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.512812/-
3	Manjula R, Shivu S, Anjani Rao, Anjani Rao N, Nagendra Rao, /MHL00340012846/ Mysore	Property No.364/243/1, Pl.D. No.152200300101220169, SathiGrama Village, LalandevanahalliGp, Krishnarajanagara Taluk, Mysore, Karnataka, Pin: 571602 Measuring Totally 49.05 Square Meters. East-Remaining Place And House Belongs To Jayamma Gopal., West- House Belongs To Nagendra., South- Road., North- Conservancy And House Belongs To Shivalinganayaka.	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.203290/-
4	Lingaraju C, Santhosh L, Devaki S, Ganesh L, /NLAP0034019458/ Mysore	Property No-137 Pl.D. No.152200103800100024, Chamegowdanhundi (Da) Grama, Kothegala Gram Panchayth, Sargur Block, Mysore, Karnataka, Pin: 571121MeasuringEastToWest13.1068Meter&North To South 10.3632 Meter. East-Road, West-House of Nagaraju, South-Property of Bettanayaka, North-Road	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.297460/-
5	Rajanigandha B, Jagadeesha K, /MHL00340021787/ Mysore	Property No. 51, Pl.D. No. 152100100800300052, Dudukanahalli Village, Beeruvalli Gp, Krishnarajapete Taluk, Manyda District, Karnataka, Pin: 571605 Measuring Totally 260.96 Square Meters. East-House Belongs To Govamma, West-Road, South-Land Belongs To Shivannegowda, North-Vacant Place Belongs To Subbegowda	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.509846/-
6	Mallamma H, Mahesha C, Channanayaka H, /MHL00340021462/ Mysore	Property No. 32/23, Unique No. 152200100311300035, Bachegowdanahalli Grama & Gp, Hd Kote Taluk & Mysore District, Karnataka, Pin: 571125 Totally Measuring 143.81 Square Meters. East-Road, West-House of Mallesh, South-House of Gangamma, North-House of Narasimhanayaka	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.295884/-
7	Shruthi S N, Kumar K G, Ganesh Gowda, Thayamma N, /MLAP0034032583/ Mysore	PropertyNo.235/1,Pl.D.No.152100101000620071, Katharagatta Village, Hariharapura Gp, Krishnarajapete Taluk, Mandya District, Karnataka, Pin: 571426 Measuring Totally 97.54 Square Meters. East-Joint WallHouseBelongsToThayamma,West-Road,South-Remaining Property Belongs To Ganeshgowda, North-Road	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.309656/-
8	Veena, Ramesh, /MLAP0130035597/ Chitradurga	Property Khatta No.382, E-Swathu No.151000402300120028 Measuring Total: 111.48 Sq Mtr, Build Up Area: 111.48 Sq Mtrs. Situated At B.G. Halli Village, T. Nolenuru Grama Panchayath, Holalkere Tq, Chitradurga Dist., Karnataka, Pin: 577557. East-Site No. 40, West-Site No. 38, South-Road, North-Site No. 10	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.457109/-
9	Kempasiddamma Kariyaiah, Kariyaiah Biliyaiah, Siddaraju K, Naga Rathanamma S, /MLAP0090035625/ Vivekananda Circle	PropertyNo.100/99Pl.D.No.152200102625200120, Kenchanahalli Village, N. Beguru Gramapanchayat, Heggadadevanakote Block And Mysore District, Karnataka, Pin: 571116 Admeasuring 168.62 Sq Mts. East-House of Chikkanna, West-Government Road, South-Private Property, North-House of Biliyaiah	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.426806/-
10	Prasad P, Jayamma B, Puttamada M, /NLAP0034034153/ Mysore	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing No. 55-508-327, Property Old No. Basthipura Site No. 01, Assessment No. 410, Situated At Ward No. 30, Basthipura New Street, Kollegala, Chamarajanagara District, Measuring Totally 157.9351 Square Meters, Karnataka, Pin: 571440. East-Pl.D. No. 55-541-376, West-Pl.D. No. 55-508-4Th B Main, South-Pl.D. No. 55-508-329, North-Pl.D. No. 55-541-18Th Cross	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.323984/-
11	Sabrintaj, Mahaboob Khan, Mahammad Muheeb Rehaman, /MLAP0130040173/ Chitradurga	Property Khatha Assessment No.326/308/296/1391/A, E-Property No.10-112-T3 Measuring Total: 34.188 Sq Mtr, Build Up Area 27.8709 Sq Mtrs, Situated At Ward No.13, Near Karnataka Piece, Gandhi Nagar, Challakere Town, Challakere Tq, Chitradurga Dist., Karnataka, Pin: 577522. East-House of Shabana Khan In The Same Khata No. 326/308/296/1391, West- Site No.25, South-House of Nurulla Shariff S/O Late Rahamath Khan For The Khata No.326/308/296/1391, North-Conservancy	10-12-2025	13-12-2025 & Rs.469453/-
12	Hanumant Tavaranayk Lamani, Jayamma Tavaryanayk Lamani, Kirana Tavaryanaik Lamani, Sujata Lamani, /MLAP0144049285/ Shikaripura	The Property Admeasuring An Extent of 3318.83 Sq.ft. Comprised In Property No(S) 17, Survey No.234/*/*, Bearing Pl.D. No.151700402300101062, Situated In Nagavanda Village, Within The Sub-Registration District of Hirekerur, Karnataka, Pin: 581210. East- Panchayat Road, West-Property of Basyanayk Lamani, South- Property of Jayamma Lamani, North-Property of Jagadishanayk Lamani	11-12-2025	15-12-2025 & Rs.549063/-
13	N K Govindaraju, Anusha J, /MLAP0090047570/ Vivekananda Circle	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing No. 131, Pl.D No.152200102723400438, Situated At Nerale Grama, Beechanahalli Gramapanchayat, Heggadadevanakote Block, Mysore (D). Admeasuring 63.17 Sq Mts., Karnataka, Pin: 571116. East-Pathway,West-Galli&HouseofChikkaHanumanayaka, South-Government Road, North-House of Dasanayaka	11-12-2025	15-12-2025 & Rs.546019/-
14	Chithra G C, Sandeep M, Manjappa B, Prashantha M, /MLAP0144038279/ Shikaripura	All That The Piece or Parcel of Site Along With Structure Standing There On Being Bearing Site/Property No. 40, E-Property No. 152400201200500042, Measuring Total 222.96 Sq. Meter, Including 55.09 Sq. Meter Situated At Melinasampahalli Village, Maruthipura Village Panchayath, Hosanagara Taluk, Shivamogga District, Karnataka, Pin: 577412. East-House of Manjappa S/O Angappa, West-House of Shekharappa S/O Burappa, South-Road, North-Survey No. 30 Vacant Place	12-12-2025	15-12-2025 & Rs.465719/-
15	M K Krishna, Sunitha, Rajesh M K, /NLAP0091047133/ Hassan	All That Piece And Parcel of The Site And House Property Bearing No. 151600302800720016, Gram Panchayath Khatha No. 229, And Property Situated At Musavattthuru Village, Aladahalli Gram Panchayath, Arkalgud Taluk, Hassan District, Totally Measuring 136.75 Square Meters, Karnataka, Pin: 573102. East-Remaining Government Land, West-Road, South-House Property of Sri. Lakshmijavaraiah, North-Property of Smt. Eramma	13-12-2025	15-12-2025 & Rs.875953/-

Notice, is therefore given to the Borrowers / Co-Borrowers, as mentioned herein above, calling upon them to make payment of the total outstanding amount as shown herein above, against the respective Borrower / Co-Borrower, within 60 days of publication of this notice. Failure to make payment of the total outstanding amount together with further interest by the respective Borrower/ Co-Borrower, MAHOFIN shall be constrained to take u/s 13(4) for enforcement of security interest upon properties as described above, steps are also being taken for service of notice in other manners as prescribed under the Act and the rules made hereunder. You are put to notice that the said mortgage can be redeemed upon payment of the entire amount due together with costs, charges and expenses incurred by MAHOFIN at any time before the date of publication of notice for public auction or private treaty for transfer by way of sale, as detailed in Section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act.

Take note that in terms of S-13 (13) of the SARFAESI Act, you are hereby restrained from transferring and/or dealing with the Secured Properties in any manner by way of sale, lease or in any other manner.

Date: 3rd January 2026 | Place: KARNATAKA **Sd/- Authorised Officer Manappuram Home Finance Ltd**

ಮಹಾನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ, ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ.

ನಂ:ದಾಮಪಾ:ಕಾಅ3:ಇ.ಟೆಂಡರ್:16:2025–26 ದಿನಾಂಕ:01.01.2026

ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

(ಇ–ಪ್ರಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮುಖಾಂತರ)

2025–26ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ ಸನ್ಮಾನ್ಯ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳ ವಿಶೇಷ ಅನುದಾನ (ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ ದಕ್ಷಿಣ ವಿಧಾನಸಭಾ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರ)– 01 ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪೂರ್ಣಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್, 2025–26ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ ಸನ್ಮಾನ್ಯ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳ ವಿಶೇಷ ಅನುದಾನ (ದಾವಣಗೆರೆ ಉತ್ತರ ವಿಧಾನಸಭಾ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರ)– 01 ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಪೂರ್ಣಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್, 2025–26 ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ ಪಾಲಿಕೆ ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯ ನಿಧಿ– 02 ಸಂಖ್ಯೆಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್, 2025–26 ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ ಎಂಟರ್ ಪ್ರೈಸ್ (ಮಳಿಗೆ) ನಿಧಿ– 01 ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಕೆಪಿಪಿಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮುಖಾಂತರ ಸಿಂಗಲ್/ಡಬಲ್ ಕವರ್ ಪದ್ಧತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪಾಲಿಕೆಯ ಕಾರ್ಯಪಾಲಕ ಅಭಿಯಂತರರು (ವಿದ್ಯುತ್/ನೀರುಸರಬರಾಜು) ರವರು ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ/ಪೂರ್ಣಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಿದ್ದು, ಅರ್ಹ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರು/ ಏಜನ್ಸಿದಾರರು/ ಸರಬರಾಜುದಾರರು ಕೆಪಿಪಿಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ವೆಬ್ ಸೈಟ್ kppp.karnataka.gov.in ನಲ್ಲಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಾಗಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಬಹುದು. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನು ಕಛೇರಿ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಹಾನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆಯ ಕಛೇರಿಯ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಶಾಖೆಗೆ ಭೇಟಿ ನೀಡಿ ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ. ಮಹಾನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆಯ ಸಹಾಯಕ ದೂರವಾಣಿ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 08192 234444 ರಿಂದ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದು.

ಸೂಚನೆ : 1) ಈ ಮೇಲ್ಕಂಡ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಯ ಮುಂದೆ ನಮೂದಿಸಿದ ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ ಹಾಗೂ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಿಟ್ಟ ಮೊತ್ತ ದಲ್ಲಿ ಯಾವುದೇ ಬದಲಾವಣೆ ಇದ್ದಲ್ಲಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ದಾಖಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ನಮೂದಿಸಿದ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಿಟ್ಟ ಮೊತ್ತವು ಅಂತಿಮವಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ. 2) ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ದಿನಾಂಕಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಯಾವುದೇ ಬದಲಾವಣೆ ಅದಲ್ಲಿ ಆ ದಿನಾಂಕಗಳನ್ನು ಕೆಪಿಪಿಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ಗಮನಿಸುವುದು ಹಾಗೂ ಯಾವುದೇ ಪ್ರತ್ಯೇಕ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆಗಳನ್ನು ಹೊರಡಿಸಲಾಗುವುದಿಲ್ಲ.

ಪೂರ್ಣಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಮಾಹಿತಿ ಪಡೆಯಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ವೇಳೆ : 16.01.2026 ಸಮಯ : 17.00 ಪೂರ್ಣಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಅಂತಿಮ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ವೇಳೆ : 17.01.2026 ಸಮಯ : 17.00 ಫ್ರೀ ಬಿಡ್ ಮೀಟಿಂಗ್ (>100 ಲಕ್ಷ) ದಿನಾಂಕ: : 12.01.2026 ಸಮಯ : 11.00 ಪೂರ್ಣಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ವೇಳೆ : 19.01.2026.ಸಮಯ : 11.00 ನಂತರ

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, NARAYANA CHIKKANNA S/o CHIKKANNA H, R/o 13/5, 23rd Main Road, Srinivasa Nagar, Nandini Layout, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560096, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as NARAYAN C.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, MARIYAPPA S/o SHRIRAMAPPA, R/o 114, 2nd Cross, Near Shiva Temple, Yemalur, Bangalore South, Bangalore, Karnataka-560037, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as HULLURAPPA.

QUICK READ

Anti-National song played near temple, man arrested

Palghar

Maharashtra Police arrested a 25-year-old man for playing an anti-national song on a loudspeaker near a temple in Chinchoti. The song was played outside a hair salon and was heard by people on the street. Police said it could disturb public peace and harm national unity. Angry locals stopped the man and informed officers. The song was played from a mobile phone using a loudspeaker. After checking the phone, police registered a case and arrested the accused. No action was taken against the salon worker. Police said investigation is continuing. Authorities warned against spreading hateful content publicly.

Music argument turns deadly in Hazaribagh

Hazaribagh

A dispute over loud music ended in tragedy in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh, where a 30-year-old man was killed late Thursday night. The incident took place around 9 pm at Indrapuri Chowk. The victim, Suraj Kumar Rana, worked as a tiles and marble mason. Police said an argument between youths returning from a picnic turned violent. Rana was dragged from the spot and attacked in nearby areas. He was taken to Sadar Hospital but declared dead. Police detained suspects, launched raids, and deployed extra forces. Investigation is ongoing. Family members demanded justice as incident shocked residents across the city.

CHADHA DEMANDS DIGNITY FOR GIG ECONOMY WORKERS

Thousands of riders joined TGPWU-IFAT strike, disrupting services and delays

NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha on Friday urged companies to treat gig workers as human beings, not merely as disposable data points. His remarks came after a nationwide symbolic strike by delivery partners demanding fair wages, better working conditions, and social security.

Chadha said he personally met with riders from major platforms such as Zomato, Swiggy, and Blinkit to understand their struggles. "This is not a rant. This is a conversation with those whose lives power our everyday comfort," he wrote on social media.

The strike, organised jointly by the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU) and the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT), saw thousands of riders across several states log off their apps or reduce work significantly. The protest affected services on one of the busiest commercial days, leading to delays and cancellations in multiple cities.

"It's tragic that millions of delivery riders who helped build instant-commerce companies into what they are today are now forced to protest just to be heard," Chadha said. He emphasised that these platforms succeeded not through algorithms alone but through human sweat and labour. "The gig economy cannot become a guilt-free exploitation economy," he added.

Chadha highlighted issues such as low and unpredictable pay, long working hours, lack of social security, and absence of dignity at work. He stressed that riders are humans—not robots or bonded labour—and are also someone's father, son, husband, or brother.

He further criticised ultra-fast delivery models, saying the "10-minute delivery torture" is harming workers' physical and mental health. He called on companies and policymakers to reform the gig economy, ensuring fair treatment, safety, and recognition of the people behind the apps who keep daily life running smoothly.

BJP targets Rahul over ECI EVM claims

NEW DELHI

The survey, commissioned by Karnataka's Chief Electoral Officer after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, covered 5,100 respondents from 102 Assembly constituencies across four divisions

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Friday accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of repeatedly making false claims about the Election Commission of India and Electronic Voting Machines, citing findings from a survey released by the Congress-led Karnataka government itself.

BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said the survey clearly contradicts Rahul Gandhi's allegations that elections in India are manipulated. He stated that the report shows strong public trust in the electoral system and in EVMs.

Posting on social media, Poonawalla said most citizens believe elections in the country are free and fair. According to the survey, 84.55 per cent of respondents agreed that elections in India are conducted honestly.

He also highlighted that trust in EVMs has increased over time. The survey found that 83.61 per cent of people consider EVMs trustworthy, up from 77.9 per cent recorded in 2023. Poonawalla said this data exposes what he called a false narrative being spread by the Congress leadership.

The survey covered 5,100 respondents from 102 Assembly constituencies across Bengaluru, Belagavi, Kalaburagi and Mysuru divisions. It was conducted after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and was commissioned by Karnataka's Chief Electoral Officer.

The study focused on citizens' knowledge, attitude and practices related to the election process. Its findings were published by the Karnataka Monitoring and Evaluation Authority under the state's planning department. The survey was carried out by Mysuru-based research group GRAAM.

The report could prove embarrassing for the Congress, as Rahul Gandhi has been leading a "vote chori" campaign, alleging election manipulation by the BJP-led NDA government.

The survey also included social observations. Women made up 56 per cent of respondents. While some felt women should consult male family members before voting, a larger number disagreed with that view.

BJP leaders said the findings reaffirm faith in India's democratic process and expose attempts to undermine public trust without evidence.

Police question cricketer over flag during match

JAMMU

Jammu and Kashmir Police have summoned a local cricketer after a Palestinian flag was seen on his helmet during a private cricket match in Jammu.

Officials said the incident was noticed on camera while the player was batting. The cricketer, identified as Furqan Bhat, and the tournament organiser have been called for questioning. Police are checking whether permissions were taken and if any rules were violated. The match was part of a privately organised local league. No action has been taken yet, and investigation is continuing, officials added after routine verification under existing law and standard procedure.

The case began in 1990 when Raju defended Australian Andrew Cervelli, convicted for smuggling contraband at Thiruvananthapuram airport

Court to deliver verdict in Antony Raju case

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Saturday is set to mark a decisive chapter in the long-running legal battle involving Kerala MLA and former Transport Minister Antony Raju as a trial court in the state capital prepares to pronounce its verdict in the controversial underwear evidence tampering case.

The case, which began more than three decades ago, has followed Raju throughout much of his political life and has drawn widespread public attention. The verdict comes after the Supreme Court in November 2024 set aside a Kerala High Court order that had halted the criminal proceedings.

The apex court restored the trial court's decision to consider the police charge sheet and directed that the delayed trial be completed within a year. Acting on this order, Raju appeared before the court in December 2024, clearing the way for the final judgment.

The matter traces back to 1990, when Australian national Andrew Salvatore Cervelli was arrested at Thiruvananthapuram airport for allegedly attempting to smuggle contraband hidden in his underwear. Raju, then a young lawyer, represented Cervelli during the trial. Cervelli was convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison.

However, the High Court later acquitted him after noting that the underwear produced as evidence was too small to fit him, raising doubts about the prosecution's case.

Years later, based on information from Australian authorities, police registered a case alleging evidence tampering against Raju.

After years of investigation, charges were filed in 2006. Now, after decades of delay, the ruling could carry serious legal and political consequences for the veteran leader, finally closing one of Kerala's most unusual legal sagas that has shaped public debate for years statewide.

Natesan defends criticism of Muslim League CPI

ALAPPUZHA

SNDP Yogam General Secretary Vellappally Natesan on Friday said his criticism of the Muslim League and the CPI is based purely on issues and party policies, not on religion or community identity. Speaking to reporters, he said efforts to brand him as anti Muslim were false and misleading.

Natesan accused the Muslim League of failing to ensure social justice when it was in power. He said the party allowed generous educational facilities for Muslims in Malappuram, while the Ezhava community received only one aided college.

He alleged the League is now trying to turn Muslims against Ezhavas, warning that such moves could create tensions like the Marad riots. Turning to the CPI, Natesan said its public positions have given an impression of division within the Left Democratic Front.

He urged the party to discuss differences internally and remember that backward communities form the backbone of the Left. On the Sabarimala issue, he defended the state government, saying its stand was sincere and based on fairness and accountability.

Commenting on a recent confrontation with a journalist, Natesan said he was provoked and acted within his rights. He clarified that his use of the word terrorist was meant in a general sense of alertness, not as a personal insult.

Natesan also criticised the Congress led UDF, alleging it denied approvals to educational institutions during its rule. He said the LDF only followed policy while granting permissions. Responding to controversy over travel in Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's car, he said the act was being wrongly portrayed as treason. He added that if the passenger had belonged to another community, no issue would have arisen.

NCB Mumbai strengthens fight against drug menace

MUMBAI

The Mumbai Zonal Unit of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) recorded major successes in 2025 while advancing the national goal of a "Nasha Mukt Bharat," or Drug-Free India, as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

According to an official statement, the agency seized nearly 5,560 kilograms of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances during the year. These included cocaine, charas, ganja, mephedrone, LSD blots, diverted pharmaceutical tablets, and large quantities of codeine-based cough syrup and chemical precursors used in drug manufacturing.

A total of 51 people were arrested in connection with 24 registered cases. Investigations followed a "top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top" strategy, targeting not only street-level dealers but also suppliers, financiers, hawala operators, and kingpins operating across states and international borders.

The NCB said properties worth around Rs 18 crore, believed to be acquired through drug trafficking, were frozen. Preventive detention under the PITNDPS Act was also used against a repeat offender, who was shifted out of Mumbai jail.

Several organised syndicates were dismantled, including networks dealing in synthetic drugs such as mephedrone and ketamine. Joint operations with state police forces led to the busting of illegal drug laboratories and the seizure of large quantities of banned substances.

The agency also acted against illicit pharmaceutical drug trafficking, arresting key figures linked to interstate and foreign-operated syndicates. In cases involving chemicals outside the NDPS Act, seized materials were handed over to state excise authorities.

Congress labels Nava Kerala survey political propaganda

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Senior Congress leader Cherian Philip on Friday termed the Kerala government's Rs 20-crore Nava Kerala Survey a CPI(M) political exercise aimed at influencing the upcoming Assembly elections. He alleged that 85,000 volunteers were mobilised through party units and that pamphlets exaggerating development achievements were being distributed at public expense. Philip said an objective survey would expose Kerala's "development collapse," accusing the government of fabricating claims such as an extreme-poverty-free state and complete digital literacy. He criticised the neglect of key LDF programmes, worsening agriculture, education and healthcare, mounting public debt, and stalled projects, calling initiatives like K-Rail, K-FON and KIIFB ineffective.

Sewage in drinking water blamed for at least 10 deaths in Indore

Continued from page 1

The Madhya Pradesh government on Friday submitted a detailed status report before the Indore Bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on the ongoing contaminated water crisis in the city's Bhagirathpura area.

According to the report, four people have officially died after consuming polluted drinking water, while around 200 residents are undergoing treatment in various hospitals.

The report, running close to fifteen pages, stated that 35 patients are currently admitted to intensive care units, highlighting the seriousness of the public health emergency. The matter is being heard through a Public Interest Litigation filed by advocate Ritesh Inani, president of the Indore High Court Bar Association.

Inani told the court that the government's report was submitted at the last moment and lacked urgency. He added that the bench has scheduled the next hearing for January 6.

During the proceedings, an intervenor requested restrictions on media reporting to avoid misinformation, but the court declined to comment on the plea.

While official figures confirm four deaths, unverified reports circulating locally claim the toll could be higher.

Authorities have been directed to ensure uninterrupted supply of clean water through tankers and strengthen medical arrangements.

Once known as India's cleanest city for eight consecutive years, Indore is now grappling with a serious health crisis.

Officials said sewage leakage near a poorly built toilet led to contamination of water pipelines, triggering cases of diarrhoea, vomiting, dehydration, and panic among residents, prompting urgent corrective measures across affected neighbourhoods to prevent further loss of life and restore public confidence in civic systems quickly and effectively citywide without delay.

Religion should stay out of political debate

NEW DELHI

Leaders from the JD(U), Shiv Sena, NCP (SP) and RJD on Friday said religion should not be politicised, reacting to Zohran Mamdani's oath-taking as New York City's first Muslim mayor, taken with his hand on the Holy Quran.

Mamdani was sworn in shortly after midnight on Thursday at a decommissioned Manhattan subway station, an event that drew global attention and sparked debate. JD(U) spokesperson Rajeev Ranjan Prasad said the US Constitution permits officials to take oaths according to personal faith, noting that similar practices exist in India and should not become political controversies. Shiv Sena leader Shaina NC said Mamdani's choice was a personal right and criticised selective outrage, pointing out that questions are also raised when Hindu leaders swear in on the Bhagavad Gita. NCP (SP) MP Fauzia Khan defended religious freedom and warned against linking faith with orthodoxy, saying such views harm peaceful coexistence.

RJD MP Manoj Kumar Jha said people worldwide take oaths in diverse ways, including in the name of God, Allah or Constitution.

HOPE FOR FREEDOM

Navy veteran's sister seeks PM Narendra Modi help

NEW DELHI

In an emotional appeal, Dr Meetu Bhargava, sister of retired Indian Navy Commander Purnendu Tiwary, has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to step in and secure her brother's release from a jail in Qatar.

She also appealed to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, expressing deep concern over Tiwary's continued imprisonment despite earlier hopes of freedom.

Tiwary, a 65-year-old Navy veteran from Gwalior, was among eight former Indian Navy officers arrested in Qatar in August 2022 on charges of espionage while working for a private company. The group was initially sentenced to death, but the punishment was later reduced to prison terms by a Qatari court in December 2023.

In February 2024, seven of the officers returned to India after receiving a pardon from the Emir of Qatar. Their release was widely credited to diplomatic efforts led by Prime Minister Modi. However, Tiwary remained behind due to a travel ban linked to alleged financial issues at his employer.

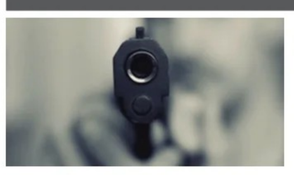
According to Bhargava, her brother has now been pulled into a new legal case related to criminal conspiracy and money laundering. She claims the case was formed from earlier charges and has resulted in a six-year sentence. Tiwary has reportedly been in jail for the past month.

Bhargava said her brother's health is worsening, as he suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure, and trauma caused by long periods of isolation. She warned that his condition could become life-threatening.

She also criticised the Ministry of External Affairs for not taking timely action and appealed to the Indian Navy's leadership to support a retired officer.

Despite strong diplomatic ties between India and Qatar, there has been no official response yet from the Prime Minister's Office or the MEA, leaving the family anxiously waiting for help.

QUICK READ



Notorious criminal caught after Patna police encounter

Patna

A dreaded criminal, Manager Rai, was arrested after an encounter with police in Khagaul, Patna, on Friday. Acting on a tip-off, officers cordoned off the area. Rai, wanted in multiple serious cases, fired at police before being injured in return fire. He was rushed to AIIMS Patna and is under police custody. Weapons and other materials were recovered from the spot. Rai, linked to a former RJD MLA, is known for murder, robbery, and illegal arms. No police were harmed. Authorities said raids and investigations continue to dismantle his network, sending a strong message against crime in Patna.

J&K police arrest woman drug peddler

Srinagar

Jammu and Kashmir's Anti-Narcotic Task Force (ANTF) arrested Tamana Ashraf, a woman drug peddler, in Batamaloo, Srinagar, on Thursday. She had been evading arrest for three years and was involved in trafficking over seven kilograms of charas to Mumbai via courier. The operation followed intelligence-led planning and ANTF's persistent efforts. Authorities said the arrest highlights the police's commitment to tackling drug crimes, which often fund terrorism. Security forces in J&K are targeting terrorists, their supporters, and criminal networks alike. The coordinated approach involves the police, Army, and BSF to dismantle both drugs and terror-related networks in the region.

Rajnath warns educated youth against anti-national acts

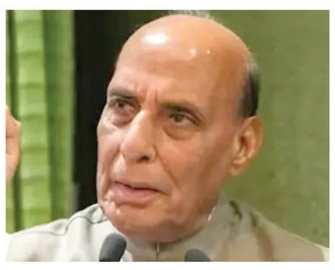
He praised India's defence startups, predicted full weapons self-reliance in 15–20 years, and highlighted AI and technology's transformative role

UDAIPUR

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday warned of a rising trend of "white-collar terrorism" in India, where highly-educated individuals are reportedly engaging in anti-social and anti-national activities. He made the remarks during the 104th foundation day of Bhupal Nobles' University in Udaipur.

Singh pointed to the November 10 car bomb blast near Delhi's Red Fort, which killed 15 people, noting that the perpetrators included doctors. "The perpetrators of the bomb blast were doctors – those who write 'Rx' on prescriptions, yet have RDX in their hands," he said. The Defence Minister stressed that education must go hand-in-hand with values and character, stating, "The purpose of education is not only professional success but also the development of morality, ethics, and human character."

The Red Fort blast investigation revealed a 'white-collar' terror module, resulting in the arrests of Dr Umar-un-Nabi, Dr Muzammil Ganai, Dr Adeel Rather, and Dr Shaheena Saeed, among others. Singh highlighted this as a cautionary example of misuse of knowledge for harmful purposes.



On a positive note, he praised the progress of India's defence startups and expressed confidence that India would become fully self-reliant in weapons within 15–20 years. He also spoke about the transformative role of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and other technologies in driving development.

Singh reminded students and citizens of the importance of balancing self-respect with humility. "While the feeling of self-respect is important, it should never transform into arrogance," he said.

He urged universities to not only impart technical skills but also focus on shaping responsible citizens who contribute positively to society and the nation. Singh's remarks reflect growing concern over misuse of education and the role of moral grounding alongside professional knowledge.

PM Modi to open Piprahwa relics EXHIBITION

NEW DELHI

Officials stated the exhibition emphasizes India's deep Buddhist heritage and showcases cultural preservation efforts, with relic repatriation enabled by collaboration between government bodies and public–private partnerships

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Grand International Exposition of Sacred Piprahwa Relics associated with Bhagwan Buddha at the Rai Pithora Cultural Complex in Delhi on Saturday, January 3, at 11 AM.

Announcing the event on social media platform X on Friday, PM Modi said the exhibition, titled "The Light & the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One", is a special occasion for those passionate about history, culture, and Buddha's teachings.

The exposition brings together Piprahwa relics repatriated after more than a century, along with authentic relics and archaeological materials preserved at the National Museum, New Delhi, and the Indian Museum, Kolkata. Discovered in 1898, the Piprahwa relics hold a pivotal place in early Buddhist history and are linked to Kapilavastu, believed to be the childhood home of Gautam Buddha before his renunciation.

According to officials, the exhibition highlights India's enduring civilizational connection to Buddhist teachings and showcases the government's efforts in preserving cultural heritage. The repatriation of the relics was made possible through collaboration between government institutions and public–private partnerships.

Organised thematically, the exhibition features a central reconstructed model inspired by the Sanchi Stupa. Sections include Piprahwa Revisited, Vignettes of the Life of Buddha, Intangible in the Tangible: The Aesthetic Language of Buddhist Teachings, Expansion of Buddhist Art Beyond Borders, and Repatriation of Cultural Artefacts: The Continuing Endeavour.

To enhance public understanding, the exposition incorporates immersive audio-visual experiences, including films, digital reconstructions, interpretive projections, and multimedia presentations. Visitors will gain insights into the life of Buddha, the discovery and journey of the Piprahwa relics, and the artistic traditions inspired by his teachings. The event is expected to attract historians, scholars, and devotees, reflecting India's rich spiritual and cultural heritage while offering an engaging journey into Buddhist history.

Cong questions B'deshi player IPL inclusion

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday criticised the government over the inclusion of a Bangladeshi cricketer in Shah Rukh Khan-owned IPL team Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), demanding accountability amid concerns over reported atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh. The row followed spiritual leader Devkinandan Thakur's claim that the decision hurt Hindu sentiments. Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinate questioned why the government and BCCI permitted the player, alleging New Delhi had failed to take diplomatic steps despite incidents of violence against Hindus in Bangladesh. She said questions should be answered by Home Minister Amit Shah and cricket authorities.

Congress leader Rakesh Sinha alleged selective outrage, arguing objections arose only because Shah Rukh Khan owns KKR, while Harish Rawat dismissed the issue as trivial. NCP MP Fauzia Khan and CPI(M) leader Hannan Mollah opposed politicising sport, urging religion be kept out of cricket. BJP leaders defended Thakur, saying the issue could provoke public sentiment and deserved reconsideration.

Kavitha criticized cousin T. Harish Rao, resigned from BRS, and has since focused on her Telangana Jagruthi organization

Kavitha hits back at Revanth Reddy's remark

HYDERABAD

Telangana Jagruthi leader K. Kavitha on Friday reacted sharply to Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's statement suggesting it would not be wrong if former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) were hanged over alleged mismanagement of river waters. Kavitha, who is KCR's daughter, said Reddy should be "hanged not once but twice."

Speaking to reporters at the Telangana Legislative Council, Kavitha expressed outrage over remarks targeting the leader who led the Telangana movement. "My blood is boiling to hear that the architect of Telangana should be hanged," she said, highlighting her strong personal and political objections.

Kavitha urged KCR to address the Assembly on the Krishna river water issue to counter criticism from the Chief Minister and his ministers. She stressed that for the survival of the BRS, KCR must personally take charge rather than leaving the matter to younger party leaders.

She also criticised her cousin and former minister T. Harish Rao, calling him a "bubble shooter" and questioning his elevation as deputy leader in the Assembly. Kavitha had earlier submitted her resignation as a Member of the Legislative Council in September, after KCR suspended her from BRS for alleged "anti-party" activities. Since then, she has been active in Telangana Jagruthi, a cultural organisation she founded during the Telangana movement.

The controversy follows Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's comments on Thursday during a presentation on river water issues by Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy to Congress leaders. Revanth Reddy had remarked that it would not be wrong if KCR and Harish Rao were hanged for alleged injustices to Telangana in water utilisation during the BRS regime.

Kavitha's rebuttal has intensified the political spat, bringing the river water issue and intra-party tensions in Telangana into sharper focus.

Uma Bharti blasts MP govt over water crisis

BHOPAL

Senior BJP leader and former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Uma Bharti on Friday strongly criticised the state government over the deadly water contamination incident in Indore, calling it a "profound shame" for the administration and a major test for Chief Minister Mohan Yadav.

In a series of posts on social media platform X, Bharti expressed anguish over the outbreak in Bhagirathpura, where sewage mixed with drinking water pipelines, causing diarrhoea and widespread illness. She highlighted the irony that Indore, repeatedly recognised as India's cleanest city, is now grappling with poisoned water that has claimed multiple lives, with the toll continuing to rise.

Bharti emphasised that human life cannot be compensated with financial aid, stating that affected families endure lifelong grief. She demanded severe punishment and public apologies from all responsible parties, from junior officials to top leaders. "Not just the Mayor of Indore, but the entire government and administration stand in the dock of public accountability," she said.

Questioning the officials' conduct, Bharti asked why those claiming lack of control did not resign and instead continued in office while consuming packaged water. "There is no explanation for such sins, only atonement or punishment," she wrote.

Recovering from eye surgery and restricted from public appearances, Bharti used social media to tag BJP leadership and Chief Minister Yadav directly, underlining the urgency of the matter.

Official reports confirm four deaths, though local claims suggest up to 14–15, including infants. Over 1,400 people have been affected, with hundreds hospitalised. Laboratory tests verified bacterial contamination from pipeline leaks near a poorly constructed toilet.

Chief Minister Yadav has visited victims, announced compensation, and initiated investigations with suspensions. Both the High Court and NHRC are monitoring the case and seeking regular updates, as the crisis continues to shock residents of India's "cleanest city."

J&K Crime Branch charges 108 over fund embezzlement

SRINAGAR

The J&K Crime Branch has filed a charge sheet against 108 people in a major case of government fund embezzlement and illegal appointments in the Electric Division Sumbal.

The accused include engineers, bank officials, clerks, and 46 fake employees. Investigations revealed that crores of rupees were fraudulently withdrawn and transferred into multiple accounts, including that of the kingpin Mushtaq Ahmad Malik. Recovered money was deposited back into the government treasury. The charge sheet was submitted under sections of the Ranbir Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Act. Court proceedings will now determine the legal consequences for those involved.

Shiv Sena warns against non-Marathi Mumbai Mayor

MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray (UBT) on Friday strongly criticised the Mahayuti government, warning that attempts to appoint a non-Marathi mayor in Mumbai would trigger a major backlash.

In an editorial in its mouthpiece Saamana titled "Traitors, Shame on Your Lives! Mumbai's Mayor Will Only Be Marathi," the party said BJP leader Kripashankar Singh's claim that the next mayor could be from the North Indian or Hindi-speaking community represents the party's official stance. The editorial called it a direct attack on Maharashtra's regional pride and identity.

"Mumbai belongs to the Marathi manush emotionally, geographically, and historically," the editorial stated, recalling the 106 martyrs who sacrificed their lives during the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement. It added, "No outsider can stake a claim over Mumbai. The mayor must be a Marathi Manoos."

The editorial accused Singh of being a "pawn" in a larger scheme by the BJP in Delhi to dilute the influence of the Marathi-speaking population in the city. It dismissed his clarification that he meant a "Hindu mayor" as a cover-up, saying Mumbai has always had Hindu mayors—but they were Marathi Hindus.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) also criticised the current state leadership for remaining silent and allegedly surrendering Mumbai's interests to Delhi, while calling out the Shinde faction as "fake" for not defending the city's pride.

The editorial urged BJP leaders to visit the Hutatma Smarak at Flora Fountain to understand the city's history and sacrifice. It warned that any attempts to impose a Hindi-speaking mayor would fail and said the people of Mumbai would ensure the reins remain with "sons of the soil."

Fadnavis urges politics stay out of literature

SATARA

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday urged writers and intellectuals to keep politics separate from literature during the 99th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan held in Satara.

Addressing the gathering, Fadnavis emphasised that the literary platform should remain free from political influence. "The Literary Meet serves as a compass for society, and the Presidential address sets the direction for the coming year. We have no interest in bringing politics into literature. As long as I am Chief Minister, there will be no political interference in this field," he said.

Fadnavis welcomed writers to enter politics personally but urged them not to mix their literary work with political agendas. He lauded Marathi scholars for enriching the language and said the pride of Marathi will remain "as long as the sun and moon exist."

Highlighting literature's societal role, the Chief Minister said it is not merely for entertainment but to expand social consciousness. On criticism from the literary community, he said he does not take offence, adding, "If criticism is valid, it shows us a path to improvement. I am not one to live in a fool's paradise believing I know everything."

In a candid moment, Fadnavis apologised for frequently using his mobile phone during the event, explaining that it was due to the final day for withdrawing nomination papers in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections. He said he was personally coordinating with party workers to manage withdrawals amid political rebellion.

Quipping about multitasking, Fadnavis assured the audience that he was keeping a close ear on the speeches delivered on stage while handling political matters over the phone, demonstrating the challenge of balancing governance with literary engagement.

The Chief Minister's remarks were widely appreciated by the literary fraternity, reinforcing the call for literature to remain a space of reflection, creativity, and social awareness, untouched by political agendas.

BRIDGING LANGUAGE GAP

ECI engages Oriya interpreters for Bengal Panchayats

KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has appointed Oriya interpreters-cum-translators for four gram panchayats in West Midnapore district of West Bengal to facilitate hearings on claims and objections related to the draft voters' list.

The affected panchayats—two each under Dantan and Mohanpur community development blocks—are located near the West Bengal-Odisha border and have a large population of Oriya-speaking voters. Many of these residents have ancestral roots in Odisha and have settled in the area for generations, relying on agriculture and animal husbandry for their livelihoods.

A senior official from the office of the Chief Electoral Officer said that most enumeration forms submitted by these voters are written in Oriya script, making it difficult for Bengali-speaking Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Assistant EROs, and Booth-level Officers to communicate. "Even new brides coming to these families often speak only Oriya. Verbal communication and translating the Oriya scripts are time-consuming and complex," the official added.

The concentration of Oriya-speaking voters in these four panchayats is notably higher than in other parts of East and West Midnapore, necessitating dedicated interpreters to ensure smooth and fair hearings. The official noted that the process takes considerably more time compared with hearings for other voters, highlighting the challenges posed by linguistic diversity in the region.

The draft voters' list was published on December 16, and the final list is scheduled for release on February 14. Once the final list is published, the ECI is expected to announce polling dates for the crucial Assembly elections in West Bengal.

The move underscores the commission's efforts to ensure inclusive voter participation and smooth electoral processes, taking into account linguistic and cultural diversity along the border regions.

QUICK READ

4 bodies recovered as more civilians forcibly disappeared by forces

Quetta

Two more Baloch civilians were forcibly disappeared by Pakistani forces amid a growing wave of enforced disappearances across Balochistan, a leading human rights organisation said on Friday. Condemning the incidents, Paank, the Baloch National Movement's Human Rights Department, mentioned that Hamdan, a native of Dasht in Kech District, was reportedly taken from his residence in Karachi on December 30 by the state intelligence agencies. The rights body described the act as a grave violation of fundamental human rights and the rule of law. It also called for the immediate disclosure of Hamdan's whereabouts and demanded his safe release.

Rights body worried about autonomy of lawyers

Islamabad

The Human Rights Council of Pakistan (HRCP) on Friday condemned the country's Punjab Bar Council (PbBC) for suspending the practising license of lawyer Mian Ali Ashfaq, describing the move as a violation of the principles of justice, the independence of the law, and fundamental human rights. The Punjab Bar Council (PbBC) in the Pakistan province suspended the practising licence of Mian Ali Ashfaq for representing social media influencer Rajab Butt before a Karachi court amid a strike called by the Karachi Bar Association.

Explosion At Faryab Court Sparks Renewed Security Fears

A deadly blast at a court highlights ongoing instability and unresolved security challenges nationwide

KABUL

An explosion at the Court of Appeal building in Faryab province has once again drawn attention to the fragile security situation in northern Afghanistan. According to local media reports, the blast occurred and immediately caused panic among residents living and working in the surrounding area.

Emergency responders rushed to the scene soon after the incident, attempting to control the situation and assist the injured amid widespread confusion and fear.

Reports indicate that Taliban officials were holding a security meeting inside the court building at the time of the explosion. This detail has raised serious concerns that the gathering itself may have been the intended target. Conflicting accounts have emerged regarding the nature of the blast. Some sources suggest it resulted from a rocket strike, while others believe it was caused by a planted mine. Afghan news agency Khaama Press highlighted these differing claims,

underscoring the uncertainty that continues to surround such incidents.

Health officials confirmed that several dead and injured individuals were transported to hospitals following the explosion.

However, authorities have not yet released exact casualty figures, leaving families and the wider public anxiously awaiting clarity. As of now, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, and Taliban officials have also refrained from issuing an official statement regarding the incident or its aftermath. This silence has further fueled speculation and concern about the security environment.

The Faryab explosion is not an isolated event. In October last year, another incident shook Afghanistan when a hand grenade exploded inside a mosque in Parwan province during evening prayers. That blast occurred in the Shinwari district on October 19 and injured nine people. Local officials later stated that the explosion happened after a man accidentally dropped a grenade he was carrying. Witnesses reported that the individual was a member of the Taliban and was also injured in the blast.

US & S.Korea Urged To Strengthen Combined Defence Posture

SEOUL

The chief of the United States Indo-Pacific Command has urged South Korea and the United States to further strengthen their combined defence posture in the coming year, stressing the need to send a clear and powerful message to potential adversaries about the high cost of aggression. Admiral Samuel Paparo Jr. made these remarks in a New Year's message released through the Korea-US Alliance Foundation (KUSAF) and the Korea Defence Veterans Association (KDVA), according to Yonhap News Agency.

In his message, Admiral Paparo highlighted the importance of continued cooperation between Seoul and Washington, particularly as the United States encourages South Korea and other regional allies to contribute to safeguarding the First Island Chain. This strategic perimeter is considered crucial to maintaining America's military preeminence in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in the context of growing competition with China. Paparo emphasized that building a formidable, combined defence capability is essential to deter aggression and preserve stability.

US military leaders emphasize alliance unity amid rising regional tensions and evolving security challenges.

The remarks come at a time of heightened regional tension following China's recent military activities near Taiwan. Earlier this week, Beijing mobilized personnel from its Army, Navy, Air Force, and Rocket Force in the Taiwan Strait and surrounding areas. The Chinese military described these actions as a stern warning against what it termed separatist forces and external interference. These developments have raised concerns among regional allies and prompted diplomatic responses.

In reaction to China's actions, the US State Department urged Beijing to halt its military pressure against Taiwan and instead engage in meaningful dialogue. Washington has repeatedly emphasized the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, viewing any escalation as a threat to regional security.

Admiral Paparo also noted that South Korea and the United States have reaffirmed their ironclad alliance through multiple high-level engagements. These include bilateral meetings between national leaders, defence chiefs, and senior military commanders scheduled throughout 2025. He called on both nations to embrace a path of shared innovation, suggesting that technological advancement and joint strategic planning will be critical to addressing future threats.

Opposition voices warn of rising violence, impunity, and political repression across Bangladesh today

Awami League Raises Alarm Over Worsening Law Order Bangladesh

DHAKA

As the law and order situation in Bangladesh continues to deteriorate, the Awami League on Friday expressed grave concern over what it described as a growing climate of fear and total impunity under the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government. The party accused authorities of allowing widespread abuses to take place unchecked, particularly against individuals linked to the Awami League, amid mounting criticism from political observers.

According to the Awami League, a particularly disturbing incident occurred on December 27, when two elderly men, Jamaluddin and Abdul Kayum, were brutally killed in their own locality. The party emphasized that neither of the victims had ever been accused of or convicted for any crime. It alleged that their only offence was being related to Mehedi Hasan, a member of the Bangladesh Student League, the student wing of the Awami League, where he had served as a local deputy publicity secretary.

The party cited observers who believe this killing was not an isolated case but part of a broader pattern of repression. The Awami League claimed that arbitrary mass detentions, attacks on homes and businesses, and the targeting of citizens based solely on political affiliation have become increasingly common. It argued that these actions are unfolding in an environment where silence from Western governments and a lack of accountability have emboldened those responsible for violence.

Referring to the upcoming February 12 elections, the Awami League warned that the prevailing atmosphere makes the prospect of a free and fair vote increasingly unlikely. An election cannot be free when fear replaces the rule of law. Political affiliation must never become a death sentence, the party stated, stressing that democratic processes cannot function amid intimidation and violence.

The party also highlighted another recent incident involving Babul Khan, the Organising Secretary of the Awami League from Kalapara Upazila. The party's media cell reported that Khan died after being taken to Barishal Medical College Hospital following a serious illness while in custody at Patuakhali District Jail.

Trump and top Iranian official exchange threats over protests

WASHINGTON

United States President Donald Trump has said Washington is locked and loaded to respond if Iran kills more protesters, after cost-of-living demonstrations in the country turned deadly. Protesters and security forces clashed in several Iranian cities, with six reported killed in the first deaths since the unrest escalated.

Shopkeepers in the capital, Tehran, went on strike on Sunday over high prices and economic stagnation, actions that have since spread to other parts of the country.

Trump said on his Truth Social platform on Friday that if Iran shoots and violently kills peaceful protesters, which is their custom, the United States of America will come to their rescue. We are locked and loaded and ready to go, the Republican leader added.

Ali Larijani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, condemned Trump's remarks, saying he should know that American interference in this internal issue is equivalent to chaos across the entire region and the destruction of American interests. We consider the positions of the protesting merchants separate from those of the destructive elements, Larijani added in a post on X.

The people of the US should know that Trump began the adventurism. They should take care of their own soldiers. Larijani's remarks likely referenced the US's wide military footprint in the region. In June, Iran attacked Al Udeid airbase in Qatar after the US strikes on three Iranian nuclear sites during Israel's 12-day war with Iran.

Shortage of funds hinders operations at Mardan children hospital

ISLAMABAD

Shortage of funds has obstructed functioning of Mardan children hospital in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, local media reported on Friday citing officials.

Speaking to Dawn, officials said that wards remained functional in the OPD of hospital while work was still being conducted on the main building supposed to provide all specialised services.

The officials said that the project required government funds. According to officials,

there was shortage of beds as three to four children suffering from flu and pneumonia complaints were adjusted on one bed. At times, the officials said shortage of supplemental oxygen adversely impacted patient care.

Deadly New Year Fire Shocks Swiss Alps Resort Town

BERN

Investigators are working urgently to identify victims and determine the cause of a devastating fire that tore through a bar during a New Year's Eve party in the Swiss Alps resort town of Crans-Montana. The incident, which occurred in the early hours of 2026, has left the nation in shock after claiming the lives of around 40 people and injuring approximately 115 others, many of them critically.

In the aftermath of the disaster, scenes of anguish have unfolded as relatives and friends desperately search for missing loved ones. Social media has been flooded with photographs and messages as people attempt to trace those who attended the party. Teenagers who were present described the confusion and fear following the fire, with many still unable to account for friends hours later. One attendee told AFP that they tried contacting people repeatedly, but phone locations remained unchanged and calls went unanswered.

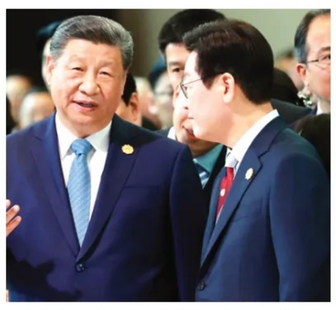
Another young witness said that photos were shared across Instagram, Facebook, and other platforms in hopes of finding missing partygoers. Despite these efforts, there has been little information. According to her, even parents of some attendees have been unable to confirm their children's whereabouts, adding to the distress gripping the community. The bar, now sealed off with opaque white tarpaulins and surrounded by temporary barriers, stands as a grim reminder of the tragedy. Emergency crews and investigators have been combing through the site while officials begin the painstaking task of identifying the deceased.

South Korean President Lee to visit Beijing for pivotal 2nd summit with Xi

GYEONGJU

Chinese President Xi Jinping has invited South Korean President Lee Jae Myung to a state visit in Beijing, signalling China's desire to reinforce relations with South Korea amid regional turbulence.

South Korea's national security adviser, Wi Sung-lac, told reporters on Friday that Lee will meet Xi in Beijing



on Monday before travelling to Shanghai to visit the historic site of South Korea's provisional government during Japan's 35-year colonial rule.

Wi said the leaders are expected to discuss practical cooperation in areas including supply-chain investment, tourism, and responses to transnational crime. Lee is also expected to persuade China to take a constructive role in achieving a breakthrough in resolving issues on the Korean Peninsula, Wi added.

DIPLOMATIC MISSION REVAMP

S.Korea Plans Diplomatic Mission Revamp Amid Global Shifts

SEOUL

South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Hyun has pledged to revamp the country's overseas diplomatic missions to enhance operational efficiency and adapt to an evolving international environment. In a New Year message delivered to foreign ministry officials on Friday, Cho outlined plans aimed at expanding and diversifying South Korea's foreign policy while ensuring that diplomatic resources are used more strategically.

Cho emphasized that the government will reassess the performance of overseas missions and take steps to streamline those that demonstrate limited effectiveness. Missions deemed less efficient will undergo restructuring, while those in strategically important regions will see their core functions reinforced. According to Yonhap News Agency, Cho stated that this approach is designed to focus diplomatic efforts on key missions that can deliver tangible outcomes for the country.

His remarks came amid reports that the Foreign Ministry had scrapped plans to open new embassies in several countries. The decision followed President Lee Jae Myung's questioning of the necessity of such expansion, effectively reversing an initiative promoted by the previous Yoon Suk Yeol administration. The shift signals a move away from numerical expansion toward a more performance-driven diplomatic strategy.

Cho also called for stronger coordination between overseas missions and South Korean public institutions operating abroad. He stressed that closer collaboration should lead to concrete benefits for South Korean citizens and companies based overseas. To support this goal, the ministry plans to introduce systematic performance and service management measures. These include strengthening the authority of heads of overseas missions to oversee locally operating public institutions and selecting officials who are better suited for foreign assignments.

Beyond structural reforms, Cho underscored the importance of economic diplomacy. He pledged to widen the economic horizons of South Korea's foreign policy, noting that exploring new economic opportunities has become more critical than ever. According to Cho, diplomacy should directly contribute to improving people's livelihoods and revitalizing businesses by opening new markets and strengthening international partnerships.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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4	3	5	2	6	9	7	8	1
6	8	2	5	7	1	4	9	3
1	9	7	8	3	4	5	6	2
8	2	6	1	9	5	3	4	7
3	7	4	6	8	2	9	1	5
9	5	1	7	4	3	6	2	8
5	1	9	3	2	6	8	7	4
2	4	8	9	5	7	1	3	6
7	6	3	4	1	8	2	5	9

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

QUICK READ

Tripura exports organic white sesame to Gujarat

Agartala

Tripura Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Friday flagged off a vehicle carrying 1,000 kg of organic white sesame for Anand in Gujarat, marking another milestone in the state's growing organic export sector. After the flag-off ceremony, the Minister said that the consignment had been exported to Media Minds in Anand, Gujarat. He added that an additional 5,000 kg of organic white sesame would be sent to Gujarat soon, citing high demand for the produce. According to Nath, Loknath Organic Farmer Producer Company (FPC), Dhalai Organic FPC, and Yapri Organic FPC jointly procured the sesame directly from farmers to ensure remunerative prices and enhance farmers' income.

Adani Enterprises launches third Rs 1,000 crore NCD issue

Ahmedabad

Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL), the flagship company of the Adani Group, on Friday announced the launch of its third public issuance of secured, rated, listed, redeemable, non-convertible debentures (NCDs) of Rs 1,000 crore, offering up to 8.90 per cent per annum. The issue will open on January 6 and close on January 19, with an option of early closure or extension. The NCDs have a face value of Rs 1,000 each. Each application will be for a minimum of 10 NCDs and in multiples of 1 NCD thereafter. The minimum application size would be Rs 10,000, said AEL, India's largest listed business incubator in terms of market capitalisation.

New PLI approvals to deepen value chains in manufacturing

New Delhi

The industry on Friday welcomed the approval of 22 new proposals under the third tranche of the Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS) by the government, saying that it marks a decisive inflection point in India's journey towards deep manufacturing and the creation of globally competitive Indian champions in electronics components. With this tranche, the total number of ECMS-approved projects rises to 46, taking cumulative approved investments to over Rs 54,500 crore. Earlier tranches saw seven projects worth Rs 5,532 crore approved on October 22 and 17 projects amounting to Rs 7,172 crore on November 17. The rapid scale-up across tranches underscores the strong industry response and the growing confidence in India's components manufacturing vision.

Maruti Suzuki Achieves Record Vehicle Production In 2025

India's largest automaker sets new benchmarks, reflecting growth, localisation, and global competitiveness

NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki India Limited, the country's largest car manufacturer, has achieved its highest-ever annual production, manufacturing over 22.55 lakh vehicles in 2025. The milestone, announced in a company statement on Friday, marks a significant achievement for the automaker and underscores its strong position in India's rapidly expanding automotive sector. Notably, this is the second consecutive year that Maruti Suzuki India has crossed the 20 lakh unit mark in calendar-year production.

The total production figure includes vehicles manufactured for domestic sales, exports, and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) supplies. According to the company, the top five models by production volume in 2025 were the Fronx, Baleno, Swift, Dzire, and Ertiga. These models continue to enjoy strong demand across different market segments, reflecting Maruti Suzuki's ability to align its product portfolio with evolving customer preferences in both domestic and international markets.

Commenting on the achievement, Maruti Suzuki Managing Director and CEO Hisashi Takeuchi attributed the record output to the dedication of employees and the strong collaboration with supplier partners. He highlighted that a high degree of localisation has played a crucial role in enabling the company to scale up production while maintaining world-class quality standards. According to Takeuchi, this achievement also demonstrates the strength and growing global competitiveness of India's automotive manufacturing ecosystem.

He further reaffirmed the company's commitment to expanding its manufacturing footprint and strengthening India's automobile manufacturing capabilities in line with the Government of India's Make in India initiative. Maruti Suzuki's growth strategy, he said, remains closely aligned with national priorities aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing and exports.

In addition to record production, Maruti Suzuki India also reported its highest-ever exports in a calendar year. The company announced that it exported 3.95 lakh vehicles in 2025, representing a growth of over 21 percent compared to 2024. This performance highlights India's increasing role as a global manufacturing and export hub for automobiles.

Bullet Train Tunnel Breakthrough Marks Major Milestone

India's high-speed rail project advances as key tunnel breakthrough energizes national ambitions

Continued from page 1

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Friday virtually oversaw a significant milestone in India's first bullet train project, marking the breakthrough of a 1.5-kilometre-long mountain tunnel in Maharashtra's Palghar district. The event, monitored from Rail Bhawan in New Delhi, was celebrated with chants of Bharat Mata ki Jai!, reflecting the symbolic and strategic importance of the achievement.

According to a press statement issued by the Ministry of Railways, the newly completed tunnel is among the longest in Palghar district and is situated between the Virar and Boisar stations along the Mumbai–Ahmedabad bullet train corridor. This breakthrough represents the second major tunnelling success in Maharashtra. The first was the completion of a 5-kilometre-long underground tunnel between Thane and the Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) in September 2025.

Highlighting the broader significance of the project, Vaishnaw emphasized the environmental advantages of high-speed rail. He noted that bullet trains achieve nearly 95 percent carbon dioxide savings compared to highway transport, making them a powerful tool in combating climate change. The minister pointed out that several countries have adopted bullet train systems primarily for environmental reasons.

Citing South Korea as an example, Vaishnaw explained that such projects not only deliver environmental benefits but also generate substantial economic gains. He added that bullet trains are designed to reach city centres directly, reducing disruption to people and traffic while efficiently serving densely populated areas.

Earlier, the minister had indicated that India is likely to receive its first bullet train on August 15, 2027. India's maiden high-speed rail project spans 508 kilometres between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, with 352 kilometres passing through Gujarat and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and the remaining 156 kilometres in Maharashtra.

The government has stated that the corridor will connect major cities including Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Bharuch, Surat, Vapi, Thane, and Mumbai.

Stock exchange highlights grievance redressal efforts while cautioning investors against fraudulent schemes

BSE Resolves Investor Complaints Strengthens Market Safety And Awareness

MUMBAI

The Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) on Friday announced that it successfully resolved 109 investor complaints against 92 companies during the month of December, reflecting its ongoing efforts to strengthen investor protection and grievance redressal mechanisms. During the same period, the exchange received a total of 141 complaints against 113 companies. The resolved cases include not only fresh complaints but also those carried forward from previous months, indicating steady progress in addressing pending investor concerns.

In its disclosure, the BSE also highlighted companies where complaints have remained unresolved for over a month. As of September 2025, the top three companies with long-pending complaints were JSW Steel Limited, Madhuveer Com 18 Network Limited, and Dhani Services Limited. The exchange regularly monitors such cases to ensure companies comply with investor grievance norms and improve accountability in the securities market.

Separately, the BSE reiterated its commitment to safeguarding investors by issuing a warning against an individual identified as Aditya Rishab Mishra, who was allegedly offering illegal financial services. The exchange cautioned investors to stay away from any products or schemes offered by him, clarifying that neither he nor the associated entities are registered as members or authorised persons of any BSE-registered intermediary.

The exchange advised investors to always verify the registration status of intermediaries through links available on the BSE website. It also urged investors not to share sensitive trading credentials such as user IDs and passwords with anyone, as doing so can expose them to fraud and unauthorised trading activity. According to BSE, such unregistered schemes involve significant financial risks and do not provide access to investor protection frameworks or dispute resolution mechanisms. In addition to BSE's efforts, other regulators are actively working to raise awareness about financial safety.

Pan masala makers need Health & Security Cess registration from Feb 1

NEW DELHI

Pan masala manufacturers need to apply for registration under the health and national security cess law immediately after it comes into effect from February 1, the finance ministry said on Friday.

For manufacturers who have machines installed in more than one factory, separate registration shall be required for each factory, and they have to apply on the Automation of Central Excise and Service Tax (ACES) portal, according to an explanation under the FAQ (frequently-asked questions) issued by the finance ministry. Such businesses will have to file the declaration on the ACES portal within seven days of the grant of registration. This declaration must specify the parameters of your machines (maximum rated speed, weight of specified goods, etc) relevant for the computation of the cess.

Deal value in India nearly doubles to $157.9 billion in 2025

NEW DELHI

Dealmaking in India delivered a breakout year in 2025, with deal value nearly doubling to $157.9 billion, up 91 per cent from 2024 and reaching a three-year high, while number of announced deals edged past last year's all-time high by 0.7 per cent, a report showed on Friday.

The surge was driven by major domestic spin-offs, buybacks, consolidation across core industries, and sustained cross-border interest. Industrials, Energy and Power, Financials and High Technology accounted for 70.5 per cent of overall value, each posting sharp year-on-year gains, according to the data shared by LSEG (London Stock Exchange Group).

With a robust 2026 IPO pipeline, strong domestic liquidity, sustained investor demand, and supportive regulatory reforms, India is poised to remain one of the most attractive markets for equity issuance in the year ahead, said Elaine Tan, Senior Manager, Deals Intelligence.

Industrials jumped 221 per cent to $35.4 billion, Energy and Power rose 190 per cent to $28.9 billion, Financials climbed 152 per cent to $27.0 billion, and High Technology doubled to $19.9 billion.

Current activity and top deals point to several key themes including pure-play spin-offs, sustained interest in financial services, accelerating energy-transition activity, and AI-driven tech consolidation—positioning the market for an opportunity-rich M&A momentum heading into 2026, Tan noted.

India's equity capital markets remained among the world's most active. IPO activity, however, delivered one of their strongest years on record in 2025 as issuers raised $21.8 billion, up 6.5 per cent from a year ago, and the highest annual total since records began in 1980s.

Number of IPOs grew 9 per cent year-on-year, marking the busiest year since the IPO frenzy during the mid-90s, supported by several large offerings such as Tata Capital ($1.75 billion), HDB Financial ($1.46 billion), and LG Electronics India ($1.3 billion). Capturing 15 per cent of global IPO proceeds, Indian exchanges ranked as the second-largest IPO venue globally, behind the United States, Tan said.

Wall St Week Ahead Jobs data could jolt stocks

NEW YORK

The first full trading week of the new year could shake the U.S. stock market out of its winter holiday slumber as the monthly jobs data headlines a busy start to 2026 for investors. Stocks slid in the final session of 2025, with the benchmark S&P 500, opens new tab falling into a monthly loss for December. But the index still climbed more than 16% in 2025, its third straight year of double-digit percentage gains, while the Cboe Volatility index , opens new tab was last just above its lows for the year. Trading volumes were thin at the end of 2025, but the new year could get off to an eventful start. Aside from economic data, investors await a U.S. Supreme Court decision on President Donald Trump's tariffs along with his choice of a new Federal Reserve chair, and U.S. corporate earnings season is around the corner.

While the S&P 500 is near record highs, it is also around the same level it was in late October, noted Matthew Maley, chief market strategist at Miller Tabak. The market is looking for direction, Maley said. We break out of these ranges and that's going to give either people a lot of confidence or a lot of concern depending on which way it breaks.

The employment data due on January 9 could provide a jolt either way. Concerns over weakness in the labor market prompted the Fed to lower interest rates at each of its last three meetings of 2025, as the U.S. central bank juggles its goals of full employment and contained inflation.

Samsung Electronics says customers praised competitiveness of HBM4 chip

SEOUL

Samsung Electronics, customers have praised the differentiated competitiveness of its next-generation high-bandwidth memory (HBM) chips, or HBM4, saying Samsung is back, co-CEO and chip chief Jun Young-hyun said in a New Year address. In October, Samsung said it was in close discussion to supply its HBM4 to U.S. artificial intelligence leader Nvidia, as the South Korean chipmaker scrambles to catch rivals including compatriot SK Hynix in AI chips. On HBM4 in particular, customers have even stated that 'Samsung is back', Jun said in remarks reviewed by Reuters, adding that the company still had work to do to further improve competitiveness.

SK Hynix, CEO Kwak Noh-Jung said in New Year remarks reviewed by Reuters that the company benefited from favourable external conditions as demand for artificial-intelligence chips materialised faster than expected.

He said competition was intensifying rapidly, noting that AI demand was now a given rather than an upside surprise, and that the business environment in 2026 would be tougher than last year, while stressing that the need for continued bolder investment and effort to prepare for the future. SK Hynix was the leading player in the HBM market in the third quarter of 2025 with a 53% share, followed by Samsung at 35% and Micron at 11%, data from Counterpoint Research showed.

Shares of Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix ended up 7.2% and 4%, respectively, on the first trading day of the year, hitting record highs and outperforming the benchmark KOSPI's 2.3% gain.

Turning to the foundry business, which manufactures chips designed by customers, Samsung's Jun said recent supply deals with major global customers had left the foundry business primed for a great leap forward.

DRAFT RULES FOR LABOUR CODES

New labour codes bring gig workers with 90-day employment

Continued from page 1

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has published the draft rules for the four labour codes, which also bring gig workers on board for various benefits such as minimum wage, health, occupational safety, and social security coverage.

The government has invited feedback from stakeholders on these draft rules and aims to finally roll out the entire package of four labour codes across the country from April

1. Under the draft rules, in order to be eligible for the benefits, a gig or platform worker must be associated with an aggregator for at least 90 days in a financial year to qualify for social security benefits created by the Centre. If a worker is engaged with more than one aggregator, the minimum requirement is fixed at 120 days.

The notification, dated December 30, 2025, was issued a day before the gig and platform workers went on a flash strike for higher wages and better working conditions.

The rules clarify that a worker is considered engaged on any calendar day if they earn income for work done for an aggregator, regardless of how much they earn.

If a worker is associated with multiple aggregators, the number of engagement days will be added together across all aggregators. The draft also states that if a worker is engaged with three aggregators on the same calendar day, it will be counted as three separate days of engagement.

Regarding the minimum wage, the draft rules state that when the rate of wages for a day is fixed, then such amount shall be divided by eight for fixing the rate of wages for an hour and multiplied by twenty-six for fixing the rate of wages for a month. In case of a five-day working week, the hourly rate of minimum wages so calculated shall be used to derive the minimum wages for the day.

While fixing the minimum rates of wages, the Central government shall take into account the geographical area, experience in the area of employment, and level of skill required for working under the categories of unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled, and highly skilled, the rules further state.

High Speed Trains in India: Racing Toward the Future

India's railway network, one of the world's largest and busiest, has been the lifeline of the nation for over 170 years. From carrying millions of passengers daily across vast distances to connecting remote villages with metropolitan cities, the Indian Railways has played an indispensable role in the country's social and economic fabric. However, as India positions itself as a global economic powerhouse and aims to modernize its infrastructure, the conversation has increasingly shifted toward high-speed rail—a transformative technology that promises to revolutionize how Indians travel, work, and live.

What Constitutes High-Speed Rail?

High-speed rail is generally defined as passenger train systems that operate at speeds of 250 kilometers per hour or more on dedicated tracks. These systems require specialized infrastructure, including grade-separated tracks with no level crossings, gentle curves, advanced signaling systems, and sophisticated train control technologies. Countries like Japan, China, France, Spain, and Germany have pioneered these systems, demonstrating their ability to transform regional connectivity and economic development. The benefits of high-speed rail are manifold. They significantly reduce travel time between major cities, making daily commutes feasible over longer distances and promoting economic integration.

They're considerably more environmentally friendly than air travel or automobiles, producing lower carbon emissions per passenger kilometer. High-speed rail also spurs economic development along its corridors, increases property values, and creates employment opportunities both during construction and operation.

The Current State of Rail Transport in India

Before diving into the future of high-speed rail, it's essential to understand where India stands today. The Indian Railways operates one of the most extensive rail networks globally, with over 68,000 kilometers of track and more than 7,000 stations. It transports approximately 8 billion passengers annually, making it an integral part of daily life for millions of Indians.

Currently, the fastest trains in regular operation include the Vande Bharat Express, which can reach speeds of up to 180 kilometers per hour, and the Gatimaan Express, connecting Delhi and Agra at speeds of 160 kilometers per hour. While these represent significant improvements over conventional trains, they fall far short of what is considered high-speed in global terms, where trains typically operate at speeds exceeding 250 kilometers per hour.

The existing infrastructure, much of it dating back to the colonial era, presents numerous challenges. Congested tracks, mixed traffic with freight and passenger trains sharing routes, outdated signaling systems, and varying track gauges all limit the potential for speed. Additionally, frequent stops, level crossings, and curves designed for slower speeds mean that even modern trains cannot reach their full potential on existing networks.

INDIA'S FLAGSHIP PROJECT: THE MUMBAI-AHMEDABAD HIGH-SPEED RAIL CORRIDOR

India's first high-speed rail project, the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Corridor, represents a landmark initiative in the country's transportation history. Often called the bullet train project, this 508-kilometer corridor is being developed with Japanese assistance and technology, including the renowned Shinkansen system.

The project, sanctioned in 2015, involves a financial agreement where Japan is providing a loan of approximately 88 billion rupees at an exceptionally low interest rate of 0.1 percent, with a repayment period of 50 years. The trains are expected to operate at a maximum speed of 320 kilometers per hour, reducing the journey time between Mumbai and Ahmedabad from the current seven to eight hours to just about two hours.

The corridor will feature 12 stations, including Mumbai, Thane, Virar, Boisar, Vapi, Bilimora, Surat, Bharuch, Vadodara, Anand, Ahmedabad, and Sabarmati.

The project involves massive civil engineering work, including the construction of India's first undersea rail tunnel beneath the Thane Creek, spanning approximately 21 kilometers, with seven kilometers actually under the sea.However, the project has faced numerous challenges. Land acquisition, particularly in Maharashtra, has been a significant hurdle, with delays in obtaining clearances and resistance from landowners. Environmental concerns, cost escalations, and the COVID-19 pandemic have also contributed to delays. Initially expected to be completed by 2022, the project is now anticipated to be fully operational by 2028 or later.

Despite these challenges, substantial progress has been made. Civil construction work is underway in Gujarat, where land acquisition has been more successful. Training facilities have been established, and Indian engineers and technicians have undergone training in Japan to operate and maintain the system. The project represents not just a transportation initiative but also a significant technology transfer that will build domestic expertise in high-speed rail.

THE DIAMOND QUADRILATERAL AND BEYOND

While the Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor captures the most attention, it's just the beginning of India's high-speed rail ambitions. The government has identified several other corridors for potential high-speed rail development as part of a broader vision to create a Diamond Quadrilateral connecting the four metropolitan cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata.

The Delhi-Varanasi High-Speed Rail Corridor has been proposed as another major project, potentially connecting the national capital with the spiritual and cultural hub of Varanasi, with possible extensions to Howrah near Kolkata. This corridor would not only reduce travel time dramatically but also boost tourism and pilgrim traffic to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The Delhi-Ahmedabad corridor, passing through Rajasthan, is another route under consideration. This would create a high-speed link between the political capital and the commercial hub of Gujarat, facilitating business travel and economic integration.

In South India, corridors connecting Chennai with Bengaluru and Hyderabad have been surveyed. The Chennai-Bengaluru route, covering approximately 435 kilometers, would reduce travel time from about six hours to around two hours, transforming connectivity between two of South India's most important economic centers.

The Mumbai-Nagpur corridor represents another ambitious project that would link India's financial capital with the geographical center of the country, opening up economic opportunities in Vidarbha and improving con

Technological Considerations and Challenges

Implementing high-speed rail in India presents unique technological challenges. The country's diverse geography, ranging from coastal plains to mountainous terrain, monsoon climate with heavy rainfall, extreme temperatures, and seismic activity in certain regions all require careful engineering solutions.

The choice of technology is another critical decision. While the Mumbai-Ahmedabad project uses Japanese Shinkansen technology, India could potentially adopt systems from other countries like France (TGV), Germany (ICE), China (CRH), or Spain (AVE) for future corridors. Each system has its advantages, and the decision will likely depend on factors like cost, technology transfer arrangements, terrain suitability, and diplomatic considerations.

Economic and Environmental Implications

The economic case for high-speed rail in India is compelling but complex. Proponents argue that high-speed rail will boost productivity by reducing travel time, allowing people to live farther from their workplaces while maintaining reasonable commutes. This could help decongest overcrowded cities and promote more balanced regional development.

The construction phase itself would create substantial employment, both directly and in related industries like steel, cement, and engineering services. The operation of high-speed rail networks would provide long-term employment opportunities and require skilled workers, driving education and training in specialized fields.

Social and Cultural Dimensions

Beyond economics and technology, high-speed rail will have profound social and cultural implications for India. The ability to travel quickly between cities could strengthen familial and social connections, making it easier for people to maintain relationships across distances. Students could attend universities farther from home, workers could accept jobs in distant cities without relocating, and families separated by distance could meet more frequently.

High-speed rail could also democratize access to opportunities. Smaller cities along the corridors would gain better access to major urban centers, potentially reducing the pressure of migration to already overcrowded metropolises. This could help preserve cultural diversity and reduce the strain on mega-cities.

THE ROAD AHEAD

As India looks to the future, high-speed rail represents both an aspiration and a challenge. The successful completion of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor will be crucial in demonstrating the viability of such projects and building public confidence. It will also provide valuable lessons for future corridors regarding technology, construction, financing, and operations. The government's commitment to high-speed rail appears strong, with continued investments and planning for multiple corridors. However, the pace of implementation will depend on addressing key challenges: streamlining land acquisition processes, ensuring adequate financing, building technical capacity, managing environmental concerns, and ensuring projects are economically viable.

International partnerships will continue to play a crucial role. Beyond Japan's involvement in the Mumbai-Ahmedabad project, India could benefit from collaboration with other countries experienced in high-speed rail. Technology transfer, training, and knowledge sharing will be essential in building domestic expertise. The development of indigenous capabilities should also be a priority. While importing technology can accelerate implementation, building domestic design, manufacturing, and maintenance capabilities will be crucial for long-term sustainability and could even position India as a future exporter of high-speed rail technology to other developing countries.

Public-private partnerships may offer a way to share the financial burden and bring in private sector efficiency, though the high capital costs and long payback periods of rail projects make them challenging for private investors without government guarantees.

VENUS RETURNS TO AUSTRALIAN OPEN, 28 YEARS AFTER DEBUT

7-time Grand Slam champ Venus Williams makes historic Aus Open return at 45

MELBOURNE

Seven-time Grand Slam singles champion Venus Williams is set to make a remarkable return to the Australian Open, five years after her last appearance and 28 years after her debut at Melbourne Park. Tournament organisers confirmed on Friday that the 45-year-old American has been awarded a wild-card entry for the season's first Grand Slam, which begins on January 18.

Williams first competed at the Australian Open in 1998, announcing her arrival on the global stage by defeating her younger sister Serena Williams in the second round. Her run that year ended in the quarterfinals with a loss to fellow American Lindsay Davenport, but it marked the beginning of a storied relationship with the Melbourne tournament.

The former world No. 1 last appeared at the Australian Open in 2021. Over her career, she has reached the singles final twice at Melbourne Park, finishing runner-up to Serena Williams in 2003 and again in 2017. Overall, Venus boasts an impressive record of 54 wins and 21 losses at the venue, and the upcoming edition will mark her 22nd appearance in the main draw.

Williams had announced in November that she would return to competitive tennis during the Australian summer, starting with the Auckland tournament in New Zealand, where she has also received a wild card. She is additionally entered for the Hobart International, scheduled for the week preceding the Australian Open.

"I'm excited to be back in Australia and looking forward to competing during the Australian summer," Williams said. "I've had so many incredible memories there, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to return to a place that has meant so much to my career."

With her entry, Williams is set to become the oldest woman to compete in an Australian Open main draw, surpassing the previous record held by Japan's Kimiko Date, who played at age 44 in 2015.

In late December, Williams married Danish-born model and actor Andrea Preti in Palm Beach, Florida, adding a personal milestone to an already memorable season.

NEW DELHI

Dutchman Sjoerd Marijne was demonstrated renewed faith on Friday as he was reappointed chief coach of the Indian women's hockey team, marking his return to the national setup after nearly four-and-a-half years. Marijne, who previously coached the side from 2017 to 2021, had guided India to a historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympic Games, their best-ever performance at the Olympics.

The 51-year-old will be supported by an experienced backroom staff, with former Argentina midfielder Matias Vila joining as analytical coach. Vila made his international debut in 1997 and represented Argentina at the 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens Olympic Games. He has since accumulated more than two decades of coaching experience at various levels.

Also returning to the Indian hockey ecosystem is Wayne Lombard, who has been appointed scientific advisor and head of athletic performance. Lombard will be assisted by Rodet Yila and Ciara Yila, both serving as scientific advisors, as Hockey India looks to strengthen the team's fitness and performance benchmarks.

"It's great to be back. After 4.5 years, I return with fresh energy and a clear vision to support the team's growth and help the players achieve their full potential on the world stage," Marijne said in a statement. During his earlier stint, India broke into the top 10 of the world rankings and earned global recognition for their disciplined and fearless style of play.

Tokyo Olympics hero Sjoerd Marijne returns to lead Indian women's hockey setup

SJOERD MARIJNE reappointed India women's hockey coach

Marijne's first major assignment will be the Women's World Cup Qualifiers, scheduled to be held in Hyderabad, Telangana, from March 8 to 14. He is expected to arrive in India on January 14, with the national coaching camp set to commence on January 19 at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) centre in Bengaluru.

Welcoming the appointments, Hockey India President Dr Dilip Tirkey thanked the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Sports Authority of India for expediting the process. "Emphasis has been laid on fitness, which was one of the key reasons for the team's historic performance in Tokyo. We look forward to a fruitful stint," he said.

Outgoing Aus opener Usman Khawaja speaks out on race, identity, and respect

Outgoing Aus opener Khawaja speaks out on race and identity

SYDNEY

Veteran Australia batter Usman Khawaja has announced that he will retire from international cricket after the fifth Ashes Test beginning Sunday at the Sydney Cricket Ground, bringing an end to a distinguished career marked by resilience, runs, and resistance to prejudice. The Pakistan-born Khawaja, the first Muslim to represent Australia in Test cricket, used his retirement announcement on Friday to strongly criticise what he described as racial stereotyping throughout his career.

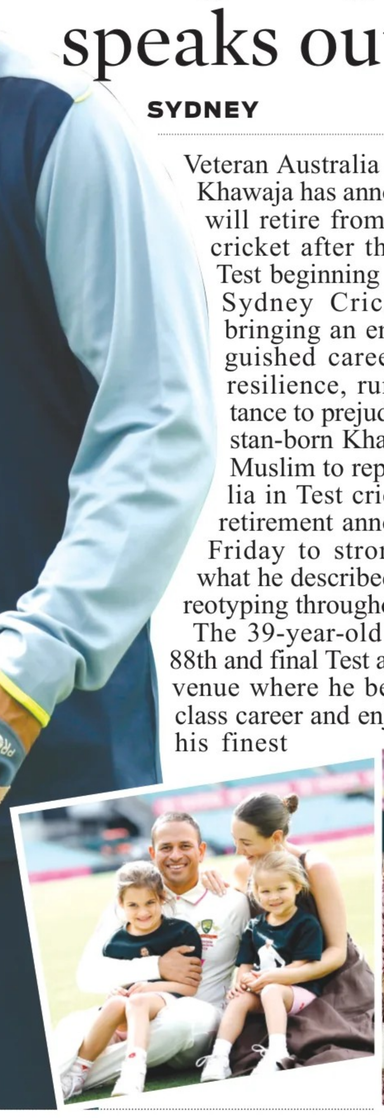
The 39-year-old will play his 88th and final Test at the SCG, the venue where he began his first-class career and enjoyed some of his finest moments. Khawaja scored his maiden Ashes century at the ground in 2018, blasting 171 against England, and later revived his career there at age 35 with twin centuries that sparked a remarkable late-career resurgence. Over the next two years, he went on to score seven more hundreds.

This season, however, Khawaja's place came under scrutiny after he missed the opening Ashes Test in Perth due to back spasms and sat out the Brisbane Test with the same injury. He was initially omitted in Adelaide before returning to the side following Steve Smith's vertigo, scoring a vital 82 to retain his spot. Australia, leading the series 3-1, have already retained the Ashes.

Khawaja said he had long felt he was treated "a little bit different" because of his Pakistani and Muslim background. He pointed to criticism labelling him "lazy" after he played golf and skipped an optional training session before the Perth Test.

"Once the racial stereotypes came in, it was things I've dealt with my whole life," Khawaja said. "When others do the same things, they're 'Aussie larrikins'. When it's me, my credibility is questioned."

Khawaja admitted he sensed this Ashes series would be his last and said he was content to retire on his own terms. He finishes with 6,206 runs at an average of 43.49, including 16 centuries. Above all, he said, he hoped his journey had inspired others to believe they belonged.



Nobbs Aims to Bring a Smile to Ailing Father Michael with WHIL Performances

CHENNAI

Watching a parent battle cancer is never easy, and Australian midfielder Kaitlin Nobbs knows that pain all too well. Her father, former India senior men's hockey team coach Michael Nobbs, has been fighting cancer for the past five years, a journey that continues to test the family's strength and resolve.

"At the moment he is going through treatment, which is challenging, but he is getting through it," Kaitlin said during a virtual interaction, her voice heavy with emotion. "He has the strongest will to live. All I want right now is for him to see me play hockey. That brings a smile to his face, and that means everything to me."

Kaitlin is currently representing SG Pipers in the ongoing Women's Hockey India League (WHIL) in Ranchi, hoping her performances can provide moments of joy for her father as he undergoes treatment in Sydney. According to a crowdfunding portal, Michael is battling lung cancer that has metastasised to his bones. A specialised drug, amivantamab, is required for treatment, with six months of medication costing approximately 66,400 Australian dollars. Kaitlin and her sister Jaimee raised funds through crowdfunding, surpassing their target, but distance remains a challenge as the family is based in Perth.

Describing her father as "one of the kindest men you will ever meet," Kaitlin said their conversations now focus more on family than hockey. "He's always my biggest support, whether I play well or badly," she added.

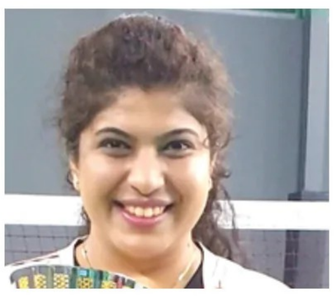
Michael Nobbs represented Australia at the 1984 Olympics and later coached India from 2011 to 2013, guiding the team to qualification for the 2012 London Olympics. Hockey runs deep in the family — Kaitlin's mother Lee Capes won Olympic gold in 1988, while other relatives have also featured at the Games.

Now a Hockeyroo of the Year awardee, Kaitlin hopes to leave Australian hockey better than she found it. For now, though, her biggest goal is simple: to keep playing, believing, and giving her father moments of happiness through the sport they both love.

GM Nischitha Creates History as First Woman Member of KBA

BENGALURU

Former international shuttler GM Nischitha has scripted history by becoming the first woman to be elected to the executive committee of the Karnataka Badminton Association (KBA). The 36-year-old was elected treasurer, marking a significant milestone in the association's 76-year history.



Badminton has been an integral part of Nischitha's life since the age of eight, when she first picked up a racquet in Bengaluru. Her rise through the ranks was swift and distinguished. In 2001, she became the first player from Karnataka to clinch a double crown in girls' singles and doubles at the under-13 National Championships. Partnering Varsha Belawadi, she later went on to achieve another unprecedented feat by winning eight consecutive senior State women's doubles titles.

Nischitha's contributions to the sport extend well beyond her playing career. An engineering graduate, she became the first woman from Karnataka to clear the BWF Coach Level 1 certification. In 2017, after becoming a mother, she broke new ground again by being appointed chief coach of the Indian team for the Junior Asian Badminton Championships.

Her election to the KBA executive committee is the latest addition to a long list of firsts during her 28-year association with badminton. Contesting as the only woman among 24 candidates, Nischitha polled 337 votes to finish fifth and secure the treasurer's post, with Kumar S Bangarappa elected president and V Muralidhar as secretary.

"I have done it all as a player and coach. It was time to make changes in the system," Nischitha said, explaining her decision to step into administration. She believes being part of the association provides the power to address long-standing issues such as player welfare, transparency in selections, quality of equipment, and fair incentives.

Known for her aggressive, no-nonsense approach on court, Nischitha hopes to bridge the gap between players, coaches, and administrators. Despite facing scepticism due to her age and gender, she remains resolute. "I have always proved what I'm capable of," she said. "I will be relentless here too."

Uncertain Future for ODIs Beyond 2027 WC, Warns Ravichandran Ashwin

CHENNAI

Former India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has voiced strong concerns over the future of One-Day International cricket after the 2027 World Cup, suggesting the format may struggle to survive once iconic players like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma move on from the game.

Speaking on his Hindi YouTube channel, Ashwin said the growing popularity of T20 leagues and the enduring relevance of Test cricket have left limited space for the 50-over format. "I am not sure about the future of ODI after the 2027 World Cup. I am a little worried about it," Ashwin said, admitting that even his own engagement with domestic ODIs such as the Vijay Hazare Trophy has reduced compared to T20 tournaments like the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

India's second-highest wicket-taker across formats with 765 scalps, Ashwin pointed out that Kohli and Rohit continue to be major drivers of interest in ODI cricket. Together, the two stalwarts have scored 86 ODI centuries. "Rohit and Virat came back to the Vijay Hazare Trophy and people started watching it. But what happens when they stop playing ODIs?" he asked.

Ashwin also reflected on how the influence of T20 cricket has altered the nature of ODI batting. He said the format once rewarded patience and game awareness, citing MS Dhoni's ability to build an innings before accelerating late. "You don't see that anymore," he noted, adding that modern ODIs often swing between extreme high-scoring contests and dramatic collapses due to playing conditions like two new balls and restricted fields.

Criticising the International Cricket Council's crowded calendar, Ashwin said the value of the ODI World Cup has diminished due to the frequency of ICC events. He argued that cricket could learn from football, where the World Cup retains its prestige by being held once every four years.

As a possible solution, Ashwin suggested limiting ODI cricket primarily to a single global event. "If you really want to make ODI cricket relevant, play leagues and then play the ODI World Cup once in four years," he said, warning that without bold reforms, the format could face a "slow death."

Suspended Wrestler Reetika Hooda Named, Then Dropped from TOPS Core List

BENGALURU

Provisionally suspended wrestler Reetika Hooda briefly found her name on the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) core list for 2026 before the Sports Authority of India (SAI) clarified that it was an error and confirmed her subsequent removal, in what has been described as an embarrassing oversight by the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC).

The updated TOPS list, is a flagship initiative of the Union sports ministry aimed at supporting elite athletes with Olympic and Paralympic medal potential. With the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games scheduled later this year, the list was keenly awaited by athletes across disciplines. However, controversy erupted when Reetika — who has been provisionally suspended by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) since July following an in-competition positive test — appeared in the TOPS core list.

Reetika, a silver medallist at the Asian Championships, is currently awaiting a final verdict in her doping case. Her inclusion raised serious questions, especially as several key performers from 2025 were omitted. When Deccan Herald reached out for clarification, an SAI official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that her name had been included "by mistake" and that she had since been dropped.

Despite this assurance, at the time of writing, the updated list had not been made public, with Reetika's name still appearing on SAI's official website.

Goalless draws for City and Liverpool hand Arsenal control at season midpoint

Manchester City, Liverpool Held Scoreless as Arsenal Open Lead

LONDON

Manchester City and Liverpool were both left frustrated after goalless draws on a low-scoring Premier League night, allowing Arsenal to extend their lead to four points at the halfway stage of the season.

City's eight-match winning run in all competitions came to an end with a 0-0 draw away to Sunderland, a side that has proven difficult at home in recent weeks. Despite dominating possession, Pep Guardiola's men failed to find a breakthrough, with Erling Haaland unable to add to his league-leading tally of 19 goals. The Norwegian striker went close on either side of halftime, but it was substitute defender Josko Gvardiol who had City's best chances, striking the post and seeing a close-range header saved.

City captain Bernardo Silva defended the performance, highlighting the team's resilience despite not being at their fluent best. Spain midfielder Rodri also made a welcome return after two months out with a hamstring injury, coming on at halftime.

Liverpool, meanwhile, laboured to a 0-0 draw against promoted Leeds United at Anfield, extending their unbeaten league run to eight matches but doing little to ease concerns over their attacking sharpness. With Alexander Isak sidelined by injury and Mohamed Salah away at the Africa Cup of Nations, Liverpool struggled for inspiration. Hugo Ekitike missed the hosts' clearest chance, misdirecting a header from close range.

Arne Slot's side remains fourth in the standings, now 12 points adrift of Arsenal in what is shaping up to be a disappointing title defence. Slot, however, took positives from the clean sheet, noting Liverpool's improved defensive solidity after early-season struggles.

Elsewhere, Tottenham were also held to a 0-0 draw at Brentford, while Fulham rescued a point at Crystal Palace thanks to an 80th-minute equaliser from Tom Cairney after Jean-Philippe Mateta had headed Palace in front.

The round of stalemates underlined the competitiveness of the Premier League, but also highlighted why Arsenal, with greater attacking consistency, have managed to pull clear of their traditional rivals after 19 of 38 matches.

Eng Add Shoaib Bashir, Matthew Potts for Fifth Ashes Test in Sydney

SYDNEY

England ring changes for final Ashes Test amid injuries and spinner-friendly Sydney pitch

England have called up spinner Shoaib Bashir and seamer Matthew Potts for the fifth and final Ashes Test against Australia, beginning Sunday at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), as they look to cover for the injury-forced absence of fast bowler Gus Atkinson.

Atkinson suffered a left hamstring injury during England's dramatic victory in the fourth Test in Melbourne, becoming the third English pacer — after Mark Wood and Jofra Archer — to see his Ashes campaign cut short by injury. One of Bashir or Potts is expected to slot into the playing XI for the series finale.

The SCG traditionally offers assistance to spin, which could favour Bashir, but weather forecasts predicting storms and rain over the first two days may complicate selection decisions. As a result, the off-spinner cannot be certain of earning what would be his 20th Test cap.

England's hopes of reclaiming the Ashes urn were extinguished after a hat-trick of defeats earlier in the series, but Ben Stokes' side will take confidence from their spirited performance in Melbourne. That frenetic two-day Test win showcased England's resilience and injected momentum heading into the final encounter.

Chief curator Adam Lewis expressed optimism that the Sydney pitch would provide a balanced contest and last the full five days. "You want to see a green tinge three days out," Lewis said on Friday. "If you're not seeing any live grass three days out, then that's when it's a worry. I'm really comfortable with where we're sitting." He added that increased sunshine over the next couple of days would reduce surface greenness and help ensure a good contest between bat and ball.

England's squad for the fifth Test includes captain Ben Stokes, Shoaib Bashir, Jacob Bethell, Harry Brook, Brydon Carse, Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Matthew Potts, Joe Root, wicketkeeper Jamie Smith and Josh Tongue. With pride and momentum at stake, England will aim to finish the Ashes series on a high against a dominant Australian side.

India's girls' teams delivered a dominant performance, clinching twin gold medals at the championship

Indian Girls Shine at International Throwball Ch'ship with Double Gold

KATHMANDU

India's under-19 and under-17 girls' teams put up a stellar show to bag gold medals at the Indo-Nepal International Throwball Championship 2025–26, held at the Deependra International Sports Complex in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The Indian under-19 girls emerged champions after a thrilling three-set final against Malaysia. India took the opening set 25-18 before Malaysia bounced back to claim the second set 25-22. Displaying composure and resilience, the Indian girls dominated the decider 15-11 to seal the gold medal. The U-17 squad was led by captain Syeda Zara Ahmed, with Rudain Ahmed serving as vice-captain. The team also featured Yashaswini S, Syeda Rida Fathima, Dhanya R, Grahika A Patil, Maryam Mohammed, Sudha Tejaswini, Sonam Chaudhary and Nayana P.

The under-17 final was equally gripping, with India overcoming Thailand in a hard-fought contest. Thailand edged the first set 27-26, but India responded strongly to win the second set 25-18. In the decisive third set, the Indian team held its nerve to secure a 15-11 victory and clinch the second gold for the country. The U-19 side was captained by Krithikha Rao MB, with Punyashree Gowda as vice-captain. Other members included Anita F Francis, Rida Modi, Pearl Andrea J, Rinaadh Ahmed, Leema Shirley W, Sancia J Raj, Nisha Joseph, Khushi M and Mandeep Kaur.

Both teams were coached by Malleshi S Dhanawade and Muniraja A, with Manisha More serving as team manager. The twin triumphs underlined India's growing strength and depth in international throwball, marking a memorable campaign on foreign soil.

Premier League: Chelsea Parts Ways with Head Coach Maresca

LONDON

Chelsea have parted ways with head coach Enzo Maresca following a reported breakdown in relations between the Italian manager and the club's hierarchy, the Premier League side confirmed. Maresca was midway through his second season in charge at Stamford Bridge.

The decision comes despite Chelsea remaining competitive across multiple fronts. The club currently sits fifth in the Premier League standings and has progressed to the semifinals of the English League Cup, keeping hopes alive of silverware and qualification for next season's UEFA Champions League.

FOUR TEAMS QUALIFY FOR NATIONALS

S. Zone Inter-University Women's Basketball Ch'ship Concludes

BENGALURU

The South Zone Inter-University Women's Basketball Championship 2025–26 concluded on January 2 at CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru, bringing down the curtains on a highly competitive five-day tournament that showcased the best of women's collegiate basketball in the region.

Held from December 29, 2025, to January 2, 2026, the championship witnessed participation from 68 universities across the South Zone. The event was marked by intense competition, disciplined play and commendable sportsmanship, with teams battling it out for a coveted spot at the national stage.

At the end of the tournament, four teams secured qualification for the All-India Inter-University Women's Basketball Championship/ Khelo India, scheduled to be held later this month. Jain University, Bengaluru, emerged as champions with a dominant performance throughout the competition. SRM University, Chennai, finished as the first runners-up, while hosts Christ University, Bengaluru, claimed the second runners-up position. MG University, Kerala, rounded off the top four by finishing as third runners-up.

The closing ceremony was graced by several distinguished guests, adding prestige to the occasion. Among those present were Fr. Dr. Joseph C. C., Vice-Chancellor of CHRIST (Deemed to be University); Dr. C. Venkatesh, Observer from the Association of Indian Universities (AIU); Rev. Fr. Dr. Bijo George, Director of Sports, Christ University; and Dr. Soumya Joseph, Head of the Department of Physical Education and Organising Secretary of the championship. Their support and guidance played a vital role in the smooth conduct of the tournament.

CHRIST (Deemed to be University) congratulated all the participating and winning teams, noting that the championship reflected the growing depth and talent of women's basketball in the South Zone. As the qualified teams now prepare for the national championship, the tournament stands out as a celebration of competitive spirit and sporting excellence.

BCCI Says No Govt Objection to Mustafizur's IPL Participation

MUMBAI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) declined to make a definitive comment on the participation of Bangladesh players in the Indian Premier League (IPL), amid debate surrounding the inclusion of pacer Mustafizur Rahman for the 2026 season. However, sources within the board clarified that no communication or objection has been received from the Government of India on the matter.

Mustafizur, who was signed by Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) for ₹9.20 crore at last month's IPL mini-auction, became the most expensive Bangladeshi player in the history of the league. His signing sparked criticism in some quarters following reports of violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh, with sections questioning whether Bangladeshi players should be allowed to participate in the IPL.

Responding to the issue, a BCCI source told that the board has not been directed by the government to restrict players from Bangladesh. "We have not received any communication from the government directing us to prevent Bangladesh players from participating in the IPL. This is not in our hands, and we cannot comment much as of now," the source said.

Mustafizur has been a familiar presence in the IPL since making his debut with Sunrisers Hyderabad in 2016. Across 60 matches, the left-arm pacer has claimed 65 wickets at an economy rate of 8.13. He has previously represented Mumbai Indians, Rajasthan Royals, Delhi Capitals, and Chennai Super Kings, and returned to Delhi last season as an injury replacement before being released again.

The controversy intensified after spiritual leader Devkinandan Thakur criticised KKR and co-owner Shah Rukh Khan, claiming the signing had hurt sentiments of Hindus and followers of Sanatan Dharma in light of developments in Bangladesh. Political reactions have been mixed, though several leaders have stressed that sports should remain separate from political and diplomatic considerations.

Former World No.1 Lifts Lid on Alcaraz–Ferrero Split, Claims "Big Fight" Behind Shock Break

NEW DELHI

Carlos Alcaraz's stunning decision to part ways with long-time coach Juan Carlos Ferrero at the end of the 2025 season has drawn fresh scrutiny after former world No.1 Yevgeny Kafelnikov made explosive claims about the reasons behind the split. According to Kafelnikov, a major confrontation involving Alcaraz's father played a decisive role in ending one of tennis' most successful recent partnerships.

Alcaraz enjoyed a historic 2025 campaign, winning two Grand Slam titles and finishing the year as the world No.1 on the ATP Tour. Yet, just before the close of the season, the Spaniard announced his separation from Ferrero, the former French Open champion who had guided his rise from teenage prodigy to global superstar. The move surprised many, given the visible chemistry between player and coach and the sustained success they enjoyed together.

Speculation has since surrounded the break-up, and Kafelnikov now claims he has insight into what went wrong.

The Russian said he had heard that tensions escalated into a "big fight" between Ferrero and Alcaraz's father. "The biggest mistake is when parents interfere in the process," Kafelnikov said. "From what I heard, there was a big fight between Juan Carlos and Carlos' father."

Kafelnikov warned that parental involvement often has a negative impact on young players, insisting that Alcaraz, now 22 and a six-time Grand Slam champion, is mature enough to make decisions independently. "Carlos is a grown man. He is the one who can make all the decisions now," he said. Offering advice ahead of Alcaraz's next chapter, Kafelnikov stressed that any new coach must ensure clear boundaries.

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